

S E V E N T E E N
S E R M O N S
O N
V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S.

B Y
NATH. TORRIANO, M.D.

RECTOR OF ALDHAM, SUFFOLK.

—— He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to
heal the sick.

LUKE, chap. ix. ver. 2.

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M.DCC.LXVII.

SEVENTEEN
SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

BY

NATH. TORRIANO, M.D.

RECTOR OF ALBANY CHURCH.



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M.DCC.LXXI.

T O

Sir JOSHUA VAN NECK, Bart.

T H E S E

S E R M O N S

ARE MOST GRATEFULLY

A N D

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY HIS

MOST OBLIGED AND OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT,

N. TORRIANO.

T. O.

JOHN W. WILSON, JR.

JOHN W. WILSON, JR.

JOHN W. WILSON, JR.



T O T H E
R E A D E R:

*****THE best apology I have to
T offer for the publication of
*****these discourses, is, that I have
done it with an EARNEST and SINCERE
DESIRE to draw off the attention of the
less serious and most unthinking part of
mankind, from what is MERELY enter-
taining, to what IMMEDIATELY concerns
them, and will secure their future EVER-
LASTING INTEREST: and altho' I am
thoroughly sensible these my thoughts may

TO THE READER.

possibly be liable to censure and criticism on every other account but their being well meant ; yet I would humbly hope that some ray of that omnipotent bounty (which has given to every part of the universe specific qualities for the benefit of mankind) will be shed on this my weak production; and so impregnate even these weeds (if I may so term them) in the rational field, that the HUMBLE and SINCERE CHRISTIAN may extract so much HONEY from them, as will serve him for support and nourishment in the COLD and WINTERY age of life, when nothing but the reflection on time well spent will be able to afford him any consolation.

The subjects of these discourses are of no small importance to every individual; and though they may be clothed in an unpolished language, yet I heartily wish they may be stooped to as to fruit growing on a shrub, or berries on a bram-

TO THE READER.

a bramble; which, though it may not be so good in kind, is always readier to be come at than that which hangs upon the loftier trees; and then I should not think my time ill spent, as I might hope to do some good, from a persuasion that they will be better understood by the more common and unlearned reader, than will those ELABORATE and DEEP PENNED discourses, which are wrapped up in the wisdom of the wise, and their dark sayings.

I am not sensible that I have treated any of the doctrines of the Old or New Testament in an unorthodox or light manner, but in such a way as is consistent with and agreeable to the doctrines of the church established, of which it is my greatest honour to be a MINISTER. I hope they will discover such a spirit of Catholicism, as in no wise to offend those, who in the NON-ESSENTIALS only think

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TO THE READER.

think proper to dissent from her communion.

And as to such who will fly in the face of the PLAIN and REVEALED will of God, and set up for themselves tenets which are not good, and teachers which are not of God, I shall freely own, that I am neither ashamed nor afraid to tell them, that they follow a deluded spirit, and give themselves up (if they act upon belief at all) to believe a lie from those who teach for doctrines the commandments of men: yet we should have that charity for these misguided souls as to pity their ignorance, and pray for them, that they may soon be brought from their mistaken notions and idolatries, whether popish or pagan, to the worship of the ONE TRUE GOD; lest, supposing it not so, they themselves should be punished for adhering to such teachers, who may justly be

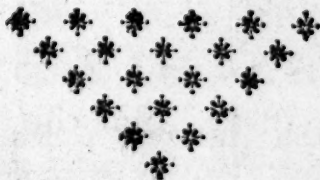
TO THE READER.

be deemed careless watchmen over God's heritage, and at whose hands no doubt the people's blood will be required.

That this my weak performance may be instrumental to bring many souls to righteousness, is the most ardent and unfeigned prayer of

ALDHAM,
JUNE 1, 1767.

N. T.



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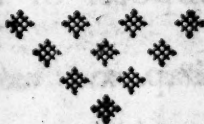
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E R R A T A.

- Page 115, for *enexhaustible*, read *inexhaustible*.
116, for *import*, read *imply*.
123, for *fall*, read *fall*.
126, for *consciousness*, read *conscious*.
127, for *light*, read *life*.
197, last line, for *is it*, read *it is*.
239, line 3d, dele *and*.
244, for *incomfortable*, read *uncomfortable*.
last line but one, for *for us*, read *to us*.
246, for *thus far*, read *thus much*.
341, for *believe*, read *live*.
344, for *excepted a Messiah*, read *expected*.
357, line 28, dele *by*, and put the word *by* in line
29, next to *but*.
363, line 18, for *grant me one*, read *this one*.
364, line 21, for *necessary*; read *not necessary*.
375, after *God*, in line 15, add the two last pages,
beginning with, *what is it these infidels would*
have?
279, for *friends*, read *friend*.



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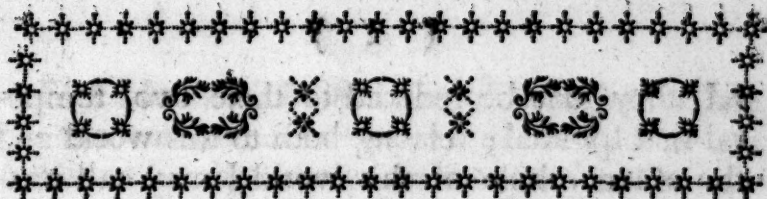
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Sermon I.

On the different ways of administering
comfort to one another.

Galatians, chap. vi. ver 2.

*Bear ye one another's burthens, and so fulfil the
Law of Christ.*

T HE nature of mankind is such;
that it is remarkable there are
scarce to be found two persons
of the same temper and dispo-
sition; but their minds are for
the most part formed as variously
as their persons and outward aspect: and to go
about to affix certain circumstances of happiness
or misery to them, or to judge of the state of
their minds, by the outward appearance they
make in the world, would be as *absurd* and *fruit-
less*, as to endeavour to eradicate the *Leopard's
Spots*, or change the skin of the *Æthiopian*.

Since then it is thus difficult to find the diffe-
rent state of men's minds; in consequence of this
difficulty, it is plain, there is no judging of the
burthens that oppress them, and the particular
calamities which bear them down: but, in gene-

ral, they may be reduced to these two, temporal and spiritual; relating both to this world and the other: those of this world I may call imaginary, or at least lesser evils, because chiefly endured by the sensualist, who (for want of a due apprehension of things of greater moment, and from not reflecting on them) is led to terminate all his desires, in the enjoyment of this world's goods, and avoiding the evils of this present life; whilst he neglects to secure the happiness of the other, and takes no care to guard against those much more dreadful evils, relative to a future life, by considering the true state of his precious and immortal soul.

But, waving any further notice of this kind, I shall proceed to consider a second sort of (or spiritual) evils or burthens; I mean those which oppress men's consciences, according to the different temper and disposition of their minds: and these also differ in degree. This is the sort of burthens which we are commanded to bear, when the text says, Bear ye one another's burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ: but the more fully to illustrate this, I shall endeavour, in the two first heads of discourse, to distinguish between them, as they proceed either, first, from the pressures of real guilt, or, secondly, as they are causeless, (which they certainly are sometimes) when suffered by the well-meaning Christian, only out of a fear of acting contrary to the laws of his God, his nature, or his conscience. This done, I shall, thirdly, endeavour to enforce the duty from the latter part of the text, and so fulfil the law of Christ. And, fourthly, shall apply the doctrine to ourselves.

First

First Head. The first sort of burthens, which we are commanded to alleviate, are such as are sustained by those, who from a continual course of sin and rebellion, are at last awakened by the stings of a guilty conscience, when the forebodings and presages of their future punishment most shockingly alarm them; and when the dreadful apprehension of their deserved sentence of damnation hangs heavy upon them, when they are thoroughly awakened by the terrors of the Lord, and when the actions of their lives call for vengeance, and as it were vindicate God's justice at the same time, in pouring out the vessels of his wrath upon them; being conscious, that if the Lord *was to enter into judgment with them, they must be cast, and he be cleared:** confessing, that he had already withheld his hand, whilst they deserved punishment, and that he was just in suffering his vengeance to overtake and fall upon them: under these circumstances, and in this condition, they are at a loss what to do, and know not whither to repair, or whom to fly to for assistance. The amusements they formerly took delight in, are now no more pleasing, but (embittered by reflection) enhance the weight of their uneasiness:---the wild extravagances, ungoverned lusts, and unwarrantable excesses, which formerly they were infatuated with, have now no satisfaction in them, nay, are even hateful to them, and only serve to add fuel to the flame of their distempered minds: now (brought to consider their ways) they are afraid to venture any more into the company of their late dissolute

A 2

and

and abandoned comrades, lest they should be tempted to return with them to their wonted vices, and so become like those unhappy persons described in St. Luke, who being once cleansed, (relapsed, and) rendered their condition much more deplorable, by such a shameful and a foul revolt. For the last state of such a man, says this evangelist,* shall be worse than the first, as it is in danger of becoming altogether irretrievable.

Under these convictions, where shall they have resource? To their faithful monitors, who fain would have reclaimed them by their admonitions and reproofs? No! To these they are ashamed to go, (conscious they had turned their backs on both) lest *they should laugh at their calamity, and mock now their fear is come.* Thus they are again at a stand, and know not where to turn: if we turn to the right, say they, what prospect have we there? *There* we shall see our old acquaintance mocking and deriding our inconstancy, upbraiding us with cowardice, and using all their subtlety to make us return with them to our former evil courses: what reason have we then to hope for their assistance? And, on the other hand, amongst our once beloved and real friends, what greater comfort have we to expect, since they will look upon us with disdain, for not listening to their good instructions, in which (we are now sensible) they had no other view but our welfare and advantage: if we look upwards, behold there an incensed and angry God, ready to take vengeance on our long delays in returning

* Luke, chap. xi. ver. 26,

ing to our duty, and almost wearied out with our repeated affronts and premeditated wickedness! A God, on whose name we have often called to judge the idle trifles of our lives, (if not invoked it to our notorious falsehoods) now ready to appear to turn us out of being, and plunge us into that misery, from which there is nothing can exempt us; for there is no one has an arm like him, who is unsearchable in his wisdom, uncontrollable in his power, and all whose ways are past our comprehension*. But what adds more to our fear is, that tho' we have no adequate conceptions in what manner, yet sure we are, that *his eyes are in every place; beholding both the evil and the good; that the most secret thing is in the light of his countenance†*; and that nothing can be hid from his all-piercing eye.

'Tis these persons, thus desponding, thus distressed, whose burthens we are commanded to bear, and whose unhappiness we must endeavour to alleviate, by ministring our counsel to them, and by encouraging in them a firm trust, that upon their turning to God, he will also turn to them, with the merciful embraces and tenders of his love: we are, moreover, to put them in mind of our *Saviour's* sufferings for them, that they may have hope in his death, and by the production of that hope, join'd to a vigorous and lively faith, may bring forth fruits meet for repentance; persuading them to *return to the Lord, whilst he may be found; for he will have mercy upon them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon‡*.

Thus

* Job c. xl. v. 9. † Psalm xc. ver. 8. ‡ Isa. c. lv. ver. 6, 7.

Thus are we to advise and cherish them, in these their heavy circumstances, and administer to them such consolations, as the word of God will bear us out in, that we may mitigate and allay these rational anxieties, bear (or at least ease) their burthens, set these prisoners free, and give them the assurance of a glorious reward in the kingdom of heaven: for *tho' the spirit of a man can bear his infirmities**, yet such a wounded spirit as theirs is who can bear? The stings of conscience, the apprehensions of an avenging God, the terrors of almighty wrath, bear such weight upon a serious and considerate mind, that they must make all the rhetoric, that can be used to comfort whosoever is thus bore down with the pressures of them, necessary. But, let it be remembered, that when we are about these good offices, we must not consult our own inclinations, nor be guided entirely by that readiness we should be apt to have, to allay the afflictions of our brother: but we must consult the Holy Scriptures, the sacred oracles of God, and from them shew the possibility of the salvation of returning sinners. We must not sooth them in their guilt, and cry, Peace, peace, where there is no peace†; but we must awake, and rouse them to a real sense of, and concern for their past offences; shew them the terrors of the Lord‡, and thence persuade them to turn unto him, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil; and who is ever ready to pardon, and re-admit to terms of salvation,

* Prov. chap. xviii. ver. 14.

† Jer. chap. vi. ver. 14.

‡ 1 epistle Cor. chap. v. ver.

salvation, even the most obdurate sinner, upon his return to him.

To act otherwise, would be to encourage them in returning to their former sins, and, instead of mitigating, would sooner or later greatly add to and enhance their griefs, by rendering them more obnoxious in his sight, who cannot behold iniquity, but with anger*. Such persons are like fallow land, which must be plowed up, and have all its weeds buried, before they can admit of the divine seeds of God's grace to be deeply sown: and 'till this is done, any other method of treatment would be like that of an unskilful surgeon, who too precipitately heals a wound, which stands in need of being probed and cleansed. But,

Second Head. Secondly, There is another sort of burthen on the mind, suffered by those whose tempers are upon the melancholy turn; who are afraid, where there is no real cause of fear; and, from giving way to the natural temper of their minds, have entertained wrong apprehensions of the Almighty, considering him as inexorable and implacable, and have conceived of the perfect law of liberty, the Christian dispensation†, as a task too insupportable; and such an one, that, as they can't perform it in that perfection which they would, they imagine the merciful promises of God made therein, are not to be relied upon by them, tho' they have done nothing *atrociously* bad, but, on the contrary, have strove what in them lies to become
his

* Heb. chap. i. ver. 13.

† Jam. chap. i. ver. 25.

his faithful servants. This then is their burthen; here lies the weight of their uneasiness; not properly a wounded spirit, but an affrighted conscience: and what consolations are to be made use of to extricate them out of this maze of groundless and unnecessary fears? The scripture is plain in answer hereto: our *Saviour* says to these, *Come unto me all ye that labour**, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And again, *Blessed are ye that mourn for ye shall be comforted. Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for ye shall be filled†*. And to whom can these *Blessings* belong, if not to those, who from the earnest desires they have to do the will of their heavenly *Father*, are, as it were, *athirst for God†*, and desire to become fit to *appear before his presence, by being holy in all manner of conversation and godliness?* || Who can claim a right to the covenant of *Christ*, and the rewards of his mercy, if not they who are willing to be obedient to his laws? as they most certainly are who are depressed by these formidable, these unwarrantable fears.

These persons see both their own sins, and the threatenings of *God*, as it were in a magnifying glass; and therefore need not have his judgments set before them in a light that would more terrify and affright them, but must have all the consolatory declarations of the merciful and all gracious *Father* of the universe display'd to them in the most pathetic manner. They are sufficiently depressed already, and want to have the

* Matt. chap. xi. ver. 28.

† Matt. chap. v. ver. 4, 6.

† Psalm xlii. ver. 2.

|| 2 epist. Pet. chap. iii. ver. 11.

the cheering cordial of his word, *who came to heal the broken in heart*†, applied to them: and, indeed, to such as these we are encouraged to perform this duty, not only in order *to fulfil the law of Christ*, but from these three following motives.

1. It is possible, that if we neglect an opportunity of consolation, for which we seem appointed, whenever the same offers, no other person may happen to be in every respect so well qualified for the work: perhaps there is none whom the afflicted would so soon unbosom their minds to as ourselves; for the same timidity of temper (which is, tho' groundlessly, the cause of their uneasiness) will prevent their endeavouring to apply for relief a second time; and as every disappointment adds to their oppressive burthen, so they may at last (merely thro' our neglect) be reduced even to a state of absolute desperation: and, convinced of this, how sad must the reflection be to us, to think that we had it once in our power to have *supported the weak, and comforted the feeble mind*; and yet, by refusing the task, have been accessory to the additional weight of their uneasiness, have counteracted our own happiness, and by that means forfeited the reward which is by promise annexed to the proper execution of this so charming a duty, so desirable an employ?

This therefore may, and ought so to work upon our fears, as to be a sufficient spur to engage us gladly to grasp at it, whenever the (to us happy, if to them necessary) occasion offers, which being

C

ing

† Luke, chap. iv. ver 18.

ing once lost, is lost for ever, as well to us as them.

2. But there is a second motive, which perhaps may be more pleasing, and that is this: we may possibly attend one of these our friends on a sick or a dying bed, and from his or her mouth receive those grateful acknowledgments, which a faith wrought in them, by our labour of love, will incite them to make to us in their last moments, when, let us suppose them saying to us thus,

“ I am now upon the confines of eternity, just
 “ quitting the visionary scenes of this vain world,
 “ and going to be rescued from all its troubles,
 “ and to be no more amused with its trifling al-
 “ lurements: I have heretofore by reflection
 “ represented myself to my own mind in the
 “ same situation wherein I now really am: but
 “ then, alas! how different was the prospect?
 “ I then looked upon the passage out of this
 “ world as a certain consignment of me to ever-
 “ lasting woe, whilst I can now view it with
 “ pleasing tranquillity, and even joy and trans-
 “ port. And whence is this happy change to
 “ me? whence but from your convincing argu-
 “ ments, which so prevailed, as to enable me to
 “ judge rightly of the state of my soul. From
 “ the moment those your kind representations of
 “ God’s mercy took place in my heart, I have
 “ ever (since) longed as it were to be released,
 “ and to be with Christ; being fully convinced,
 “ that he is a Saviour of all them that come un-
 “ to God through him; and am now ready
 “ and willing to depart this life, because I see
 “ with

“ (with the eyes of my faith) the Lord’s salvation.” How joyous must such a scene as this be to us? But this is not all; for it is possible,

3. Thirdly, that part of our happiness in a future state may arise from a knowledge of each other: and if any thing can add to the joys of that place, surely this may; to have it proved to us, that our labour was not in vain, by seeing our beloved friend safely lodged with us, in the mansions of eternal bliss; whose safe arrival there (we are fully convinced) was at least furthered by our means. And this I think may very probably be part of the blessing conferred on those, who have acted so kind, so beneficial, so benevolent a part to their fellow creatures, and who, by so doing, have fulfilled one of the chief branches of duty arising from their social natures.

Tho’ the terrors of the guilty, and the overwhelming fears of the melancholy mind, are the two most material and heavy burthens which we are enjoined to bear, yet I must observe, there still remains one more, which I am afraid, in general, too strongly prevails; and that is, poverty and distress of circumstances: it is, I say, to be fear’d, poverty often wears a more dreadful aspect in the opinion of the greater part of mankind, than guilt; and though the burthen thereof is, to my thinking, very light and easy, in regard to that of a wicked mind; yet it is not to be looked upon in an inconsiderable view, and therefore constitutes one very material branch of that duty imply’d in my text, *Bear ye one another’s burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ:*

for as we are to be in preaching and in exhortation, earnest in season and out of season; so are we likewise not to shut up our bowels of compassion against our needy brother, but be always ready and willing to give to him that needeth, for this very reason, that as most men are guided and impressed by the objects of sense, so it is very possible that desperate circumstances may (to an unreflecting mind) be the source of a falling off from God, or a cause of despair in one of a more considerate cast; for whilst the wicked are angry with the Almighty for the evils he permits to fall upon them, and (in consequence are) foolishly determined to forsake him; so, on the other hand, those of a more considerate and dispassionate turn of thought, believing that these sore afflictions are laid upon them for their unworthiness and demerits, they look upon it as if God had entirely forsaken them, and in consequence hereof, fall into that distrust, which makes them fear they are neglected of God; whereby they grow dispirited, and cannot exert their reason to combat with those notions, which under such conflicts and agonies of spirit they have formed of God.

I might here add the prevalence of constitution, and the constant and general effect of the body upon the mind, but this will be more fully considered in my 7th and 8th Discourses. Now as these two situations may be the result of poverty, so the duty that offers to us in this case, is that of a charitable contribution towards their personal reliefs. We must *give them of our substance, and minister to them out of our abundance;*
for

for till this is done, and the pressure of their troubles is removed, they cannot sufficiently collect themselves, so as to think of the more remote, tho' not less interesting concerns of their souls; and it will be almost impossible for us to convince them of the Placability of God, and his infinite unbounded mercy, or at all to work in them that disposition that is necessary towards their acceptance with him. This state is to them like that of a foul stomach in a *phlegmatically* sick person, which must be cleansed before any wholesome food, or salutary medicines, can be applied with any hopes of success.

Third Head. I come now, as I proposed, in the third place, to enforce the duty from the latter part of the text, *And so fulfil the law of Christ*. And is there not in this a mighty encouragement to our *labour of love*, that by so doing we shall fulfil the law of Christ? What a Reward? What a happiness is this? How should it encourage us to endeavour the recovery of a sinner, when we are sure it is a work well-pleasing unto God, that we shall thereby also be the instruments of making the very angels rejoice*, at the recovery of a sinner, at the prodigal's return to his father's house, and be of that happy number, who shall shine as the stars in heaven†, for having turned many to righteousness. Nor is this all, for we have another strong encouragement to this pleasing duty, namely this, that if our Saviour declared a blessedness to those, who only *fed the hungry* and

* Luke, chap. xv. ver. 7. & 10.

† Dan. chap. xii. ver. 3.

famish'd bodies of his servants, of how much greater happiness shall he deem those worthy, who have ministred consolation (*as a cordial*) to the afflicted mind, and poured in the *balm* of kind counsel to the wounds of the sinner's soul? to those wounds, which (without their kind instructions, and timely warnings to forsake their sins by repentance) must have so polluted them, that they would have been entirely lost for ever.

Application. And now in the fourth and last place, I come to make an application of the whole.

1. And, first, since we see then the real and just cause of fear, which is likely (sooner or later) to overtake the wicked, let us be persuaded by the mercies of God, to shake off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor*, lest we should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin†. If there be any of us, who have hitherto been gross and notorious offenders, I doubt not, but (for the present) these considerations will be very irksome and ungrateful, and this advice like a bitter pill: they will, I am persuaded, give us real uneasiness, but let them sink down into our hearts, that they may grow up in us, and make us perfect in every good word and work‡. Let us cease to do evil, and learn to do well§. Let us be bold and constant in the way of righteousness; and may the God of all consolation so influence our minds, that the devil may not again enter into us; but that we may add

* Dan. chap. iv. ver. 27.

† Heb. chap. iii. ver. 13.

‡ Heb. chap. xiii. ver. 21.

§ Isa. chap. i. ver. 16, 17.

add to our faith patience*, and to both a steady perseverance unto the end; and then we may be assured that our souls shall live; *for he is faithful who hath promised, that whosoever endureth to the end shall be saved*†.

2. Secondly, as we see likewise the great encouragement which the scriptures offer us for our perseverance in this good work, let us be always ready to give assistance to the weak‡, and comfort the feeble mind, to minister to the necessities of our brethren, and heap coals of fire on the head of obdurate sinners, until we melt them into tears of lamentation, and cause them to repent; that so by turning a sinner from the error of his ways, we may save a soul from death§, and cover a multitude of sins, and may hereby render ourselves worthy, (through his merits who died for us) of inheriting the promises of eternal life made to them, who shall have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited those who were imprisoned by their lusts. In order to do which the more perfectly, and with the least reluctance, let us endeavour,

3. Thirdly, to set light by the world, and all its trifling allurements, (as far as prudence and a proper care to provide for the maintenance of ourselves and families will admit) that so by degrees, from having no relish but for the world's vain pleasures and amusements, we may at last find comfort in attending the sick room of an expiring friend, and observe more music in a

* 2 epist. Pet. chap. i. ver. 5, 6. | † 1 epist. Thess. chap. v. ver.

† Heb. chap. x. ver. 23.

Matt. chap. x. ver. 22.

14.

| § James, chap. v. ver. 20.

commendatory prayer, and more extacy in expressions of hope, full of immortality, than in any other kind of entertainment, whatsoever: not that there is really any harm in these things, if not prosecuted to excess; for the mind wants sometimes to be relaxed, and were the laws of religion, and the precepts of the gospel, always to keep it on a stretch, we should then be as it were constrained, and not led to virtue.

Non arcum semper tendit Apollo.

Nor does the Christian religion enjoin such severity: it authorizes (as I know of) no massacres, no prisons, no inquisitions for blood, but, on the contrary, allows of every innocent amusement, every harmless joy. The ways of religion are ways of pleasantness*, and all her paths are peace; and do not consist in a meagre sour appearance, or in a desponding, uncomfortable conversation. No! our ever gracious and good God has placed us in this world, with every pleasing object about us, to excite our joy and gratitude to him, and that we might receive pleasure from the innocent and temperate use of every thing, in that abundant provision he has made for us.

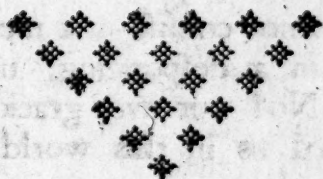
I have now slightly finished what I proposed, by shewing that the burthens of the guilty mind, those of the timorous and affrighted one, and that of poverty, are what we are to remove from

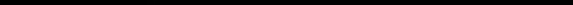
* Proverbs, chap. iii. ver. 17.

from our afflicted brethren, in order to fulfil the law of Christ: and I am fully convinced that this done with real sincerity, will give *that* satisfaction to the doers of it, which none else can feel *, and *that* peace which the world cannot give; and, what is more, will hereafter minister an entrance to us into the mansions of eternal bliss §. *Amen, so be it.*

* John, chap. xiv. ver. 27.

§ 2 epist. Pet. c. i. ver. 11.





Sermon II.

On the Virtue of Contentment.

Proverbs, chap. xxx. ver. 8, 9.

Give me neither poverty, nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

AS *happiness* is the end which all pursue; and the satisfying their desires by the enjoyment of those things on which they place their bliss, the chief end they aim at; so it is very necessary they should fix their affections aright, and pursue that, which in the end will prove, not an *imaginary*, but a *real happiness*: and as a perfect state thereof is not to be found in any sublunary enjoyments; since it is not in *health*, in *riches*, or in the most *propitious smiles of fortune*, perfectly to yield it; nor yet if we look to the right hand is it there, or to the left, and it may be found: I shall endeavour to shew where we may *justly* place our desires, and prove that the chief and only happiness is that which consists in an entire resignation of our own imperfect erring wills, to the most perfect and unerring will of God: for as he is
not

not only able, but willing to give us all things necessary for us, it is he who is the proper object to apply to in all our wants and straits.

A proof whereof we have here in the text, in the example of *Agur*, who (fearing the consequences of the extremities of fortune, either in a prosperous, or an adverse state) makes his petition in these words; *Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my God in vain.* And this petition he utters in at the 2d and 3d verses of this chapter, with a modest confession of his own ignorance of the wonderful works of God, compared with the superior knowledge of other men, saying, *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of the Holy:* in which profound humility, he has exhibited a pattern well deserving our imitation.

In discoursing further upon these words, I shall do these four things.

First, Shew the reasonableness of this prayer; *Give me neither poverty nor riches.*

Secondly, Point out how well it becomes reasonable, dependent creatures, to ask the necessities of life from him, who is the disposer and giver of all good things; following therein the example of good *Agur*, when he prays, *Feed me with Food convenient for me.* And as this is not only meant of the food of the body, but also of all other accommodations of which we stand in need,

need, both to our well-being here and hereafter; I shall consider,

Thirdly, What is here meant by food convenient for us; and then,

Fourthly, Endeavour to mention some excitements to the following Agur's good Example, in never being too anxious for the things of this life, but *having food and raiment to be therewith content*; considering that the least portion of the enjoyments, and even necessities of this life, is more than any of us can merit, or deserve from the hand of God.

I. First then, I am to shew the reasonableness of this prayer, *Give me neither poverty nor riches*. The depravity of man's nature, and the sensuality of his appetites are such, that they prompt him to desire those things, which (as a short-sighted creature) he would often find (if granted) to be (not what he imagines real goods) but on the contrary, great evils; and such as he would be no less desirous to have removed, than he was before solicitous to have granted: and tho' he is ready to murmur at the all-wise disposal of *Providence*, and to repine at that state in which God has placed him, yet could he see as God sees, he would with pleasure acquiesce, and quietly sit down, and own that the Lord was gracious, and had dealt with him better than he deserved, had done more for him than he himself could have presumed to ask, had he known how great a benefit it would have proved in the end to him.

But

But was the man who desires to be immers'd in riches, and surrounded with all the shining gaieties and pompous trifles this life affords, gratified therein; how does he know in what manner this state might affect his mind? He can't tell what a temptation they might be, or how he might behave himself in these so different circumstances; especially, should he rise on a sudden from a very adverse to a very prosperous state. He now repines at the *flourishing state of the wicked*, and cries out with the Psalmist, that *the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, that he has shut up his loving kindness in displeasure* *. But then he should also with him consider his own *infirmities* †, search his heart, and try if he can find why the Lord withholds these seeming benefits from him, or to what good use these chastisements of the Lord may be improved. And such considerations would (sooner or later) satisfy his mind, and make him easy.

For instance, Is he uneasy, and murmurs at his lot or portion? the same temper and disposition, the same restless and ambitious mind, would render him equally so in a more exalted station, even when the now pretended reason (the narrowness of his circumstances) was removed: and would not this be a gross affront to the great author of his being, and the only disposer of *every good and perfect gift*, thus to fly in his face, affront his majesty, and thereby subject himself to his anger; which will render him liable to a much more intolerable burthen than any earthly calamity would prove.

Again,

* Psalm lxxvii. ver. 9.

† Psalm lxxvii. ver. 10.

Again, this wish'd for acquisition (if obtain'd) might perhaps excite those passions in him, of pride, self-conceit, and vain-glory, which in the state he now is, he is not obnoxious to: and as all mankind are by nature born in sin, or, as a late poet expresses it*, have a ruling passion; so those passions he was born with still remain in him, and at what time soever they shall have their proper objects to work upon, how does he know to what heights they may carry him, and how fatally he may prove in himself, what Agur feared in the text; a being tempted to *question the Being*, or *spurn at the power of his God*, and to say, *Who is the Lord?* or like the Israelites, (while the meat was yet in their mouths, that is) while he was experiencing the immediate protection of the Almighty, and receiving from him every thing that was necessary for him; lest, I say, in these circumstances he may be tempted to *forget his God, who had done such great things for him*†.

David, the man after God's own heart, gives us a melancholly proof of this in two instances, his numbering the people‡, and the murder of Uriah the Hittite§; both crimes highly provoking to God, and injurious to men, as was proved by the punishment inflicted for the commission of them; and yet both proceeded from the pride of his heart, and the power that was committed to his trust, and what he could never have committed, while in the humble state of a shepherd;

* Pope.

† Psalm cvi. ver. 21.

‡ 2 Sam. chap. xxiv. ver. 9.
§ chap. xi. ver. 15.

herd; never have been guilty of, had he not arrived at the dignity of a crown.

Now if this was the case with the man after God's own heart; if he who had more than a common regard shewn him, more than ordinary honours conferred upon him by the Almighty, and was under a more especial influence of his spirit; if he, I say, could prove so weak, when tried by temptations, how vain are the pretences of the greatest part of mankind, who say, that if they were in such a station, *they would not act as such an one*, but would be more *circumspect* in their behaviour, more *thankful* to providence, and *excel* them far in returns of *gratitude*.

Again, let us suppose, on the other hand, a man entirely bereft of all comforts and consolations, that might allay the common uneasinesses of life, insomuch that he was ready to say, with the Psalmist, *that trouble was hard at hand, and there was none to deliver him**; but that he was become a scorn and a derision to them that were round about him†; that the arrows of the Lord stuck fast in him, and his hand pressed him sore‡; yet in these trying circumstances, he ought to exercise his patience: how much more then, when he is freed from all these calamities; when his lot is cast in so fair a ground, and he has so goodly an heritage§, as not to be encumber'd either with the super-abundance of riches, or pinched with the pressures of poverty; which last state is beset with many and great temptations; and is really such a state, as may very reasonably be

* Psalm xxii. ver. 11.

† Psalm xliv. ver. 13.

‡ Psalm xxxviii. ver. 2.

§ Psalm xvi. ver. 6.

be deprecated, because it requires a more than ordinary fortitude and resolution (even almost to a degree of stoicism) to bear up under it; and the many melancholy circumstances attendant upon it are almost impossible to be conceived, unless by those who will visit their fellow-creatures in distress.

David himself (upon considering the many calamities the righteous suffered, who were tried in the furnace of affliction, and beholding the prosperous state of the wicked) confesses, *that his foot was almost gone, that his treadings had well nigh slipped* *. And why was this, but because he could not penetrate into, or conceive the wise and hidden reasons of providence for such his dispensations. But, supposing at the worst, any one afflicted in this terrible manner, and thus sorely visited by God's chastising hand; I know no better remedy than to consider with Job, *that he who gave may take away* †, or with the *Apostle*, who assures us, that *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth* ‡; thus endeavouring by the force of these considerations to attain to a resigned temper and disposition of mind, to prove ourselves acceptable to God, and thereby prevail upon him, in his own good time, to take away his plagues from us.

And whoever acts otherwise, fatal will be the consequence if (for want of considering the hand that smites) he begins to repine, and foolishly to tax God with injustice; because the next step he takes, will be the doing, what Agur fears he

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should

* Psa. lxxiii. v. 2.

† Job, ch. i. v. 21.

‡ Heb. ch. xii. v. 6.

should be tempted to, in the like circumstances; namely, to *steal* from and *defraud his neighbour*, and *take the name of his God in vain*; the which, whoever does, he has declared, *he will not hold him guiltless**. But to remedy this evil, we see Agur prays he may so live in that happy medium, between both extremes, as not to be subject to the temptations either of poverty or riches; which leads me

II. To the second general head, wherein I proposed to shew (from the other part of his prayer) how well it becomes reasonable creatures, who depend on a being above them for the supply of all their wants, to ask the absolute necessities of life of him, who has the sole disposal of every good; which I shall illustrate from these words, *Feed me with Food convenient for me*. And

1st. Although I have shewn that, great is the danger of having all the appetites and passions gratified, which our frail natures would prompt us to wish might be so; and, on the other hand, the great temptations to which the lowest ebb of fortune might expose us; yet I think it very consistent with our beings, as dependent creatures, to be often praying to him, from whom all blessings flow, for those supplies which our weak natures stand in need of. For to do otherwise, or to be neglectful of that God who gave us our being, would be affronting to him, and as it were, (as much as in us lies) to

*Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod;
Rejudge his justice; be the God of God.*

* Exod. chap. xx. ver. 7.

to snatch, I say, out of his hand, that disposing power he has over us: whereas the contrary practice is consistent with our natures, and pleasing to him, who has promised *to give good things to them that ask them**. But then this asking must be a modest and resign'd petition, and in a strain somewhat like our Saviour, in that incomparable form wherein he pray'd to his father, that if it were possible, the bitter cup of his affliction might pass from him. "If it be possible (says he) let this cup pass from me †." But yet, tho' he was in such an agony, he still pray'd with humility and resignation to his father's will. For (as he continues) "if it may not pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done ‡." So should it be with us: we should pray, and that earnestly, as St. Paul says, but it must be with resignation, to have or not to have our petitions granted, or our afflictions removed, as may be most for the honour and glory of our great creator, and most conducive to the good of our own souls: or else, our very prayers may prove hurtful, and perhaps while we use them as a means to obtain what we wish for, they may (by being offered up with too great eagerness) prove the very reason why it does not please our heavenly father to grant them: for St. James says, *Ye ask and receive not§, (and why?) because ye ask amiss.*

Again, secondly, as our bodies are wearied by labour and afflictions, or perhaps only by the common weakneses and indispositions attending upon mortality; so are they always wanting

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some

* Matt. chap. vii. ver. 11.

| † Matt. chap. xxvi. ver. 42.

† Matt. chap. xxvi. ver. 39.

| § Jam. chap. iv. ver. 3.

some supplies, which we could not give them without the assistance of God: and in consequence of this, we may and ought to pray with Agur, *to be fed with food convenient for us.* But what is meant by this food,

III. I come now in the third place to consider.

1. And this, Agur seems to intimate to us, was *such food* as would not pamper his body, and yet would be sufficient for the supply and support of his needful strength, to keep it in such a temperament as might render it most serviceable to the end of its being; *such food* as would raise his gratitude, and make him own his obligations to the indulgent hand of providence, which had dealt so plenteously to him of all good things; and at the same time not raise so much as a single thought, that he was above dependence upon him; *lest*, says he, *I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?* that is, lest I disown thy particular and over-ruling power and providence.

2. By food convenient for us may also be understood a similarity of those circumstances, to which we have been accustomed for the major part of our lives; somewhat agreeable to the condition we have been brought up in; because an alteration either greatly above or below that condition may include in it new trials and temptations, by the force of which we might be overcome, and be (as it were) surprized into sin.

A man, who by a religious course of life, and by a due reflection upon the many providences

dences which have been afforded him in it, has brought himself to such a happy frame of mind, as to desire nothing *absolutely*, but only as it may tend to the *glory* of the giver, or the real benefit of himself on whom it is bestowed, need not be uneasy, or ever fear he should be forsaken; but may comfort himself by what David says, *The patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever**; that God loveth the righteous, and supporteth them with the wholesome strength of his right hand†. And, besides, our Saviour gives such an one comfort, assuring him, that *as he takes care of the lillies of the field‡, and the young ravens that call upon him*, he will be much more bountiful to the sons of Adam, who are thankful to him for what they have at present, and rely upon him for what they hope hereafter to enjoy; to such who glorify him, both in their bodies and in their spirits§; in the one, by acknowledging the benefits received; and in the other, by using them as he designed who gave them: which reminds me now,

IV. In the fourth and last place, to mention the proper excitements to the practice of this duty of submission to God, and patience under whatever sufferings he chuses to lay upon us, or in whatever circumstances he is pleased to place us. And surely we Christians, who have a further view than the momentary enjoyments of this life, need not many persuasions to the performance of this duty, nor need we many arguments

* Psalm ix. ver. 18.

† Psalm xx. ver. 6.

‡ Matt. chap. vi. ver. 28.

§ Psalm cxlvii. ver. 9.

§ 1 epist. Cor. chap. vi. ver. 20.

ments to be used with us, who have before our eyes the example of our Saviour, to tread in his steps, and follow his pattern; who (tho' the son of God) submitted to the extremest hardships with resignation, because it was the will of his father that he should endure such bitter sufferings, and who, for our sakes, was content to *lie in a manger*, to endure *the contradiction of sinners*, and be treated with the greatest ignominy and reproach.

First, then, let the consideration of his sufferings, who did not deserve them, make us resign'd to afflictions, who cannot suffer more than we deserve; and, on the other hand,

2dly, Let the transitoriness of this world's enjoyments make us think of them as they deserve, not as lasting treasures, but as fleeting toys, (*as they find who have been in possession of them, and have experienced their loss*). And in consequence hereof, let us

3dly, Not be too eager in the pursuit of them, remembering what the apostle says, *He that would be rich, will fall into divers temptations* *.

Again, could a man see as God sees, and at one view enter into the consequences of things, and behold the intricate mazes through which the Almighty sees fit to lead him †, in his way to happiness; and were the misfortunes, the losses, the crosses and disappointments, with which men are embarrassed, made plain to them beforehand, and the pleasures and satisfactions also which they were to enjoy, they would, on the one hand, be
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* 1 epist. Tim. chap. vi. ver. 9.

† Vide Tab. Cebet.

too much elated, and on the other too much depressed and cast down, by these so different prospects; just like the noon-day sun, darting its rays, instantaneously, on the eyes of one who had been long confined in the dark, which would rather dazzle than be chearing to his sight: a fresh argument this, why we should submit to the all-wise disposal of Almighty God.

4thly, Let the consideration of our own mortality, and the near approaches of our dissolution, work in our minds a disregard to the things of this world; for however dear they are, and how much soever we care for them, we must shortly leave them. Let us consider, that whilst, perhaps, we are feasting in the luxurious delights of sense, and at a time when we least think of it, we may be snatch'd away, and call'd forth to answer for the use or abuse we have made of the talents committed to our trust. At that day, our full coffers and amassed gains will minister no delight, but the good or bad use we have made of them will be what will acquit or accuse us, *at that great and terrible day of the Lord; for riches profit not in the day of wrath**.

5thly, Are any of us pinched with want, and bore down with the pressures of poverty? Still let us trust in God; be silent when he smites, and say with old Eli, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good†*: especially if our afflictions are the necessary consequences of our own wicked actions, as they often prove to be, then let us confess, that *the Lord's ways are all equal, just and good‡*; and even under these (seemingly hard) circum-

* Prov. c. xi. ver. 4. † 1 Sam. c. iii. v. 18. ‡ Ezek. c. xviii. v. 29.

circumstances, let us be persuaded, that *he will either make a way for us to escape**, upon repentance, or will invigorate our spirits, and support us under those calamities he shall see fit to lay upon us. If we have no riches wherein to trust, we are free from the misuse of so dangerous a talent, *for to whom much is given, of him will be the more required†*. But God does not, nor will he punish us for not employing or improving talents, which he has not thought fit to give us. Again,

6thly, If all supports should fail, and nothing should be left to minister a glimpse of comfort; yet let the pleasing prospect of a never-ending happiness, when this life's troubles are at an end, raise our depressed spirits to a confidence in God, taking to ourselves those comfortable passages in holy writ, that *whosoever by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, to them will be given eternal life‡*, and *whosoever endures to the end, shall be saved§*.

And this hope of a glorious and eternal happiness, is not like those plac'd in the *transient* and *momentary* pleasures of this world, which cease with the enjoyment, and when possess'd, never answer our expectation, nor is it like the luscious paradise of Mahomet, made up only of sensual joys: no! the prospect of this our future blessing can never be too great, because it is a happiness adequate to our most unbounded wishes, and lasting as our souls.

But

* 1 epist. Cor. chap. x. ver. 13. | † Rom. chap. ii. ver. 7.

† Luke, chap. xii. ver. 48. | § Matt. chap. xxiv. ver. 13.

But then this hope must have a right foundation, and be grounded on such a confidence towards God as proceeds from a quiet conscience, and our own *hearts not condemning us*; for, says the apostle, *If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God**. If in our prosperity, we have neither denied, or question'd his being, or in our adversity, taken his name in vain, we have then great reason to hope our happiness is secured for ever: and this hope is such a consolation, as is sufficient (being thoroughly fix'd and rivetted in the mind) to invalidate all the anxieties of life, and disarm death it self of it's malignant sting; because then, *Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world†*: and if God be for us, who can be against us? who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? 'tis God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth‡?

6thly, and lastly, I would address myself to those, whom the good providence of God has placed in that happy medium of wanting neither food nor raiment, and who yet have not such a superfluity of either of them, as to become strong temptations to sin: to such, who are neither oppress'd by indigence, nor tempted with abundance, but whose lot is cast *in so fair a ground§*, as to free them from the temptations of both extremes.

1st. And such I would advise, first, to be very thankful to Almighty God for this his great and particular kindness to them, and endeavour so to

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behave

* 1 epist. John, chap. iii. ver. 21.

† Rom. chap. viii. ver. 31.

‡ 1 epist. John, chap. iv. ver. 4.

§ Psalm xvi. ver. 7.

behave, that they may avert any dreadful calamity from overtaking them, and having such opportunities of doing good, by being placed, as it were, in the center, and invested with a kind of spherically beneficent power, in respect to those above, below, and all around them, that they would let their light so shine before men, that *others seeing their good works, may glorify their father which is in heaven**.

2dly, Let that mediocrity which some enjoy, a state free from despondency, and above contempt, make them endeavour to be meek and humble, and above all to have fervent charity†, behaving with a just regard to all above them, and with an easy, affable, courteous and obliging carriage to all below them; endeavouring, *as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men‡*. To persons in this happy situation,

3dly, I would just hint, in the third place, that though they are liable to the fewest temptations, yet is not their state absolutely exempt from them; *so that they must take care to keep their mouth, as it were, with a bridle, and their footsteps guarded, that they may not slide§*. For let them remember, that their sins are aggravated who commit them, when very slightly tempted; this middle station doubtless having the least provocation to close with any temptation offered.

4thly, Finally, it behoves us all to endeavour to be strong in the Lord||, and in the power of his might, and to be continually preparing to give
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* Matt. chap. v. ver. 16.

† 1 Pet. chap. iv. ver. 8.

‡ Rom. chap. xii. ver. 18.

| § Psalm xxxix. ver. 2.

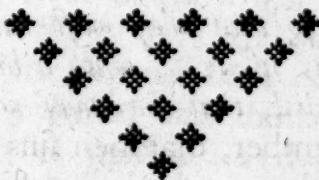
xvii. ver. 5.

|| Eph. chap. vi. ver. 10.

an account of the things committed to our trust, that whensoever God shall call us (with the rest of the world) so to do, *we may do it with joy, and not with grief**, and may be of that happy number, who shall be made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, and sit at God's right hand for ever.

Which that we may all do, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c.

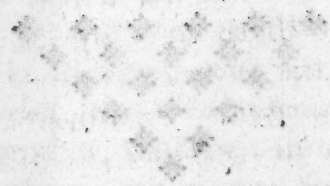
* Heb. chap. xiii. ver. 17.



an account of the things contained in it, and
that when God shall will, we shall
be able to see the things which are
not now seen, and we shall be able to
understand the things which are now
understood, and we shall be able to
know the things which are now known,
for ever.

Which that we may all be able to
understand, we shall be able to
know the things which are now known,
for ever.

"I have written this."



Sermon III.

The Duty of an exemplary Life.

Proverbs, chap. iv. ver. 18.

The path of the just is as the shining Light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.

AS the ends which the good and the wicked have in view are widely different, so are the means which they make use of towards the attainment of them also different.

The one have *limited* and *confined* views, whilst the other aims at nothing less than grasping (as it were) *eternity*, and swallowing *infinitude*. The *wicked* run all the lengths which their narrow pursuits prompt them to: the *miser* hugs his wealth, tho' at the expence both of his *ease* and *pleasure*: the *ambitious man* thinks every thing too little which he possesses, and is continually reaching after more and greater advancements, whilst the *envious* is repining at his allotment, and wishes for any other station but that in which providence has placed him. The *first*, to acquire his ends, stops at no means, tho' ever so injurious to himself and others, provided it tends to the advancement of his wealth. The *second* rises up early, and with great assiduity attends the levies of the great, always imagining himself nearer

nearer to, or further from his wish'd for preferment, in proportion to the smiles or frowns of his patron: the *last* of these weighs and measures his happiness, not so much by what he himself possesses, or has in view, as by the downfall of such, whom he enviously imagines may prove his competitors.

But how contrary to these are the *achievements* the *righteous* aim at! The pleasing *God*, and being like *him*, are the noble springs which they are moved by. 'Tis nothing less than being infinitely happy, without intermission and without end, which spurs them on to the performance of that law, which (upon the trial) would be found to be *perfect liberty**, when compared to the fatigues and troubles, the anxieties and disappointments, which are the constant attendants upon a wicked course of life. And in order to attain this their wish'd for end, the wise man tells us what they do; namely, that *they make their path as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day*†; a beautiful simile this! comparing the light of the mind and understanding to that light which shines to illuminate the world: intimating, that as the day is brought on by degrees, before the sun comes to its meridian, so the path of the just is gradually perfecting, by the daily increase of God's grace, until their minds and comprehensions are perfectly improved, by the fullest illuminations of God's spirit.

In discoursing further upon these words, I shall do these three things.

I. First,

* Jam. chap. i. ver. 25.

† Prov. chap. iv. ver. 18.

I. First, Shew what is meant by the path of the just.

II. Secondly, What, by its being represented as a shining light, and in what sense it may be so called: *The path of the just is as a shining light.*

III. Thirdly, What is meant by that perfect day, which their paths are said to shine more and more unto: *The path of the just is as a shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.*

I. First, then, I am to shew what is meant by the path of the just, which I take to be no other than the course of life they lead: and as when children are first taught to go, it is gently and by degrees, step by step, so is it here. Before the path of the just may be attributed to any man, his behaviour must be some way answerable to the character of a righteous man, at which state of perfection, if he is so happy as to arrive, it must be by the dictates of God's word having been impress'd upon his mind, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. And when this instruction has had its due weight, and has rais'd any one up to the *measure of the stature of Christ even to a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus:** then (and not till then) are they fit to make their paths become as shining lights to direct others; *lest, whilst they are teaching others, they themselves should prove cast-aways.*†

Which

* Eph. chap. iv. ver. 13.

† 1 epist. Cor. chap. 9. ver. 27.

Which brings me to the second thing propos'd, namely,

II. Secondly, to shew, why it is represented as a shining light, and in what sense it may be so call'd. And,

1st. Because they will deal by the golden rule of equity, and do to others, as they would have by others done to them. And this is so rarely to be met with, that in those in whom it does appear, in any tolerable degree, it may be justly call'd a shining light.

2dly. It may be equally so represented, when it is met with in a set of persons, who are ready to oppose and stedfastly resist the torrent of infidelity and profaneness, idolatry and superstition so prevalent in the world. Or when,

3dly. Any one is (like Joshua) ready to stand alone, in the performance of his duty, and leaving others to *chuse for themselves whom they will serve*, whether God or Mammon, firmly resolves, that as for himself, *he and his house will serve the Lord**.

Our Saviour assists us in a further explanation, when he exhorts Christians, so to let their light shine before men †, that they seeing their good works, may learn to follow them, and thereby glorify our father which is in heaven. Now, here are the very words *light* and *shining*. He speaks of both, and can mean no other than that they should by a constant continuance in well-doing, excite others to imitate them, and to be daily endeavouring after perfection, that they might

* Josh. chap. xxiv. ver. 15.

† Matt. chap. v. ver. 16.

might always be fit to be examples to others; whereas were they to sit down contented, like the proud Pharisee, when they had done such and such things*, and think themselves worthy, because they are more righteous than their neighbours, their virtue would lose its reward; because it is those, and only those, who continue in well-doing to the end, who can be saved. *Not every one, says our Saviour, that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven†, i. e. Not every one who makes a bare profession of his duty, but those whose faith grows into works, so as to do the will of God as well and as perfectly as they can: those, who perform as much of their duty, as the weakness of man's nature will permit, that shall arrive at happiness, and inherit eternal life.*

4thly. The path of the just may be said to be a shining light, when they, who have formerly led vitious lives, reform.

If from running into the excesses of the world, and following its vanities through most of the uncertain mazes of its temptations: if, I say, such an one (who perhaps may have been given over for lost, by those who wish'd his real good) should be reclaim'd, how great would this conquest be, and what encouragement would he have to make his after-paths, as a *shining light*, and endeavour to add more and more to his virtues, so as to make them *shine* unto the *perfect day*! for how triumphantly might he glory, who had given such proofs of the vanities of the world, by turning to a course quite different

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* Luke, chap. xviii. ver. 11.

† Matt. chap. vii. ver. 21.

ferent from that, wherein he had formerly lived, after he had had the desires of the flesh gratified, and too, too fatally had proved the stinging remorse, which the too luscious pleasures of an ill-spent life give to their deluded votaries.

Such an one as this can display in lively colours the difference of the two extremes, and the better endeavour to make his new achieved virtues the more conspicuous in the eye of the world, and to the glory of his God, by a conquest of his passions: such an one may prove a happy instrument of making many rich in good works, by following his example.

Again, such an one will be helped in his conquests, by a consideration, which might perhaps damp others, who had not gone his lengths in sin: they perhaps would be afraid of confronting the scoffers at religion *, and could not brook the being pointed at by them: but this man has this advantage, that he can retort all their foolish jests and banters, their sacrilegious blasphemies, back upon themselves; by assuring them, that altho' he was once (like them) in darkness, *yet now is he light in the Lord, and will therefore walk as a child of light* †; that he has proved what vain supports these ridiculous bravadoes were, and, what is more, how terribly the reflection stung him at the happy hour of his conversion, when they were so far from alleviating that they added weight to those chains he then shook off. They who now laugh at his serious melancholy, and impute to him the censures of religious phrenzy, may perhaps wish, when 'tis

too

* Psalm i. ver. 1.

† Eph. chap. v. ver. 8.

too late, that they had let his example influence their conduct; and he, who is now reformed, may hereafter laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh; when it cometh upon them as a desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon them*; and when their misdeeds prove a burthen too heavy for them to bear†.

But let us take another view of this man in his converted state, with regard to his practice.

As before, when his heart was not right towards God‡, he was inviting sinners to his counsels, and lying in wait to catch unwary souls§, to draw them into the snares of Satan, desiring them to take part, and share the lot with him||; now he is quite the reverse, and continually endeavouring to add to the number of God's chosen, and in proportion as he came late, almost at the eleventh hour, into the vineyard¶, so is he the more industrious to redeem his past time, and compensate for the guilt of his former follies.

Thus by the greatness of his change, and the assiduity of his endeavours, he makes his new-acquired virtues the more conspicuous, and his paths to shine with the greater brightness; always striving to make new additions to them, having now respect to the recompence of reward§§, at the perfect day; namely, that reward, which for encouragement is promised, not only to him, who himself turneth away from the wickedness that he had committed|||, that he may thereby save his

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soul

* Prov. chap. i. ver. 27.

† Psalm xxxviii. ver. 4.

‡ Psalm lxxviii. ver. 37.

§ Gen. chap. xlix. ver. 6.

|| Prov. chap. i. ver. 14.

¶ Matt. chap. xx. ver. 12.

§§ Heb. chap. xi. ver. 26.

||| Ezek. chap. xviii. ver. 27.

soul alive; but also that reward, which is promised to those, who for turning many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars in heaven*. Thus is the path of the just a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

III. I come now to consider, in the third place, what is meant by the *perfect day*, which the path of the just is said to shine more and more unto.

And this is briefly the day of judgment, when time shall cease, and the never-ending day of eternity shall dawn upon the righteous. But to illustrate this more fully, I shall, 1st, Consider, why the day of judgment should be called the perfect day; and, 2dly, What inducement this day offers for our endeavouring to make our paths to be as shining lights, and to become more exemplary and conspicuous in virtue.

1st. And, first, I am to consider for what reasons the day of judgment is called a perfect day: and they are chiefly these five; namely,

1. Because in that day, all the secrets of mens hearts shall be revealed†, and every sinner's guilt and good man's virtue shall be made perfectly clear.

2. Because it will admit the Righteous, in consequence of our Saviour's death and glorious resurrection, into a state of consummate happiness, where all their toils will be at an end, and they possessed of never-ending joys; intitled to, and rewarded with such things, as eye hath not seen,

* Dan. chap. xii. ver. 3. † Luke, chap. ii. ver. 35.

nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive †, whilst clothed with mortality, and encompassed about with many sorrows.

3. It may be called a perfect day, because then the wicked will cease from troubling; then the weary will be at rest. Then corruption will put on incorruption§; and then the mortal shall be clothed with immortality||; when death, disarmed of its sting, shall no more terrify or fright our doubtful souls; the consideration of which (whilst here on earth) damp'd every enjoyment. But there shall be no more anxiety, sorrow and sighing shall there be done away*, and every thing shall then appear joyous and delightful; every desire shall be fully gratified, though greatly enlarged: and what is more than all this, is, that this blessedness shall last for ever, it shall never end. But with the ungodly it will not be so†: they will then weep and groan, and cry to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them ‡ from avenging justice, but in vain: for,

4. This day will appear to be a perfect day in regard to them also; because to every one will be rendered according to their actions done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil §§. Then will be verified the promises of God, that the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him |||, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him: the soul that sinneth, it shall die||§.

The

† 1 epist. Cor. chap. ii. ver. 9.

§ 1 epist. Cor. chap. xv. ver. 53.

|| Ibid. ver. 54.

* Isa. chap. xxxv. ver. 10.

† Psalms i. ver. 4.

‡ Luke, chap. xxiii. ver. 30.

§§ 2 epist. Cor. chap. v. ver. 10.

||| Ezek. chap. xviii. ver. 20.

||§ Ibid. ver. 4.

The wicked shall then go, as our Saviour says, *into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal**.

And as God is infinite in wisdom, so is he also perfect in justice, and in consequence cannot act inconsistently with himself; because such a procedure would argue imperfection; and not to punish the wicked would clash with his truth and other of his attributes: and as God is in himself absolute in every perfection, so he cannot pardon the wicked, *who are his abomination†*. But by wicked here, I only mean such as have lived so as to be out of the reach of God's covenanted mercy; who, *tho' he is infinite in mercy, and his compassions fail not, yet he has declared he will not always strive with man‡*; and to such it will and may be justly said, that as they, *in their life-time*, despis'd God's reproof, and would none of his counsel, so now will he also *laugh at their calamity§*, and mock now their *fear cometh||*. The kind words of, *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?**** will in that day be chang'd into, *Go ye cursed into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels††*; or perhaps it may be said to them as to the rich man, *You in your life-time received your good things‡‡*, and now shall you be punished and tormented; not because ye used the good things towards your necessary support, but because ye abused the overplus to wicked purposes, and neither ministred to the necessities of your brethren, nor

* Matt. chap. xxv. ver. 46.

† Prov. chap. xv. ver. 9.

‡ Gen. chap. vi. ver. 3.

§ Prov. chap. i. ver. 30.

|| Ibid. ver. 26.

** Ezek. chap. xxxiii. ver. 11.

†† Matt. chap. xxv. ver. 41.

‡‡ Luke, chap. xvi. ver. 25.

nor employed those many talents committed to your trust, but in the service of sin; and *knowing your master's will, ye did it not, therefore shall ye be beaten with many stripes §§.*

5. But, lastly, what makes this day most *emphatically* to be called the perfect day, and what will administer the greatest joy and consolation to the righteous, is, that they shall see the Lord Jesus Christ ||| now triumphantly sitting upon his throne, to give them admittance into those realms of light, where *they shall know even as they are known*: then shall they see him with their own eyes, and not with another's*; him, whom (whilst they were in the flesh) they loved; him, for whom their souls languished, and for the enjoyment of whom they were ready to cry out, *O! who shall deliver us from the body of this death †.* And again, *When shall we come and appear in the presence of God ‡: Him whom they saw through a glass darkly, shall they now see face to face §, and he shall make them his joint heirs, and reward them with as full satisfaction as their souls can wish for, by admitting them to that fulness of joy, which is at his right hand, and to those pleasures which will last for evermore ||.*

2dly. Secondly, I shall now shew what inducement this perfect day offers, to excite our endeavours to make our paths become shining lights, by rendering ourselves more exemplary and conspicuous in virtue. And this is of two sorts,

I, As

§§ Luke, chap. xii. ver. 47.

||| Matt. chap. xxv. ver. 31, 34.

• Job, chap. xix. ver. 27.

† Rom. chap. vii. ver. 24.

‡ Psalm xlii. ver. 2.

§ 1 epist. Cor. chap. xiii. ver. 12.

|| Psalm xvi. ver. 11.

1. As it works upon our fear, by shewing how we shall be punished if we neglect our duty, and,

2. Upon our hope, that prevailing passion of and spring to an ingenuous mind.

1st. First, then, since we have seen the terrors of the Lord, and know how severely the wicked will be punished, let us be prevailed upon, to shake off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor*, lest we be reckoned of, and rewarded with the number of those, who have shewed no mercy. Let us turn unto the Lord, whilst he may be found, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon†; and this will be a good step towards making our paths shine as lights to others.

2dly, Let us endeavour to put on the whole armour of God‡, and perform our baptismal vow by fighting manfully under his banner, that by our Christian courage, we may excite others to imitate our good example, and may at last be made partakers of that blessedness, which shall be distributed on this day, amongst those, who have been faithful soldiers and servants of God unto their lives end. The consideration of which blessedness, naturally leads me,

2. In the second place, to speak to the other inducement, which the perfect day of the Lord offers to us, to work upon our hope by. But as the most extended comprehension and most fluent rhetoric are utterly unable, either to conceive or express adequate ideas of this blessedness; so the resemblance I can give of it, will be but faint,

* Dan. c. iv. v. 27.

† Isa. c. lv. v. 7.

‡ Eph. c. vi. v. 11.

faint, and yet (I doubt not) but there will appear even in this faint and weak description, excitements sufficient to encourage us, to be *exemplary in our lives and holy in all manner of conversation.* And,

First. He, who is prepared for this day, by the habitual preparation of a good life; who acts consistent with, and in conformity to, the dictates of his best informed conscience, and performs his duty to God, his neighbour, and himself, as well as he can; he, who *with simplicity and godly sincerity hath had his conversation in the world**; such an one can meet death, undaunted, and by so doing, will evidence plainly, that it is only a gate to life, and a door to let him into joys unspeakable and full of glory; into that rest of the Lord, where no *unclean thing can enter*, into that state which will be a sufficient and full reward, for all his labour of love: and what are the light afflictions of this world, when compar'd to infinite and eternal happiness? when *they work out for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory†*? what are the wrongs and slights of men to a soul, filled with immortality? to a soul *that can glory in tribulations? knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of god is shed abroad in our hearts‡.* What are they to one who is filled with a persuasion (not *enthusiastical* but *rational*) that he shall be caress'd by angels, whenever he shall quit this vale of misery and tears? what

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will

* 2 epist. Cor. chap. i. ver. 12. | † Romans, chap. v. verse 3, 4,
 ‡ 2 epist. Cor. chap. iv. ver. 17. | 5.

will a sequestration from earthly pleasures be to that mind, whose hopes are fixt upon a more enduring substance, on the possession of a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens †? where, when arrived, he shall rest from his labours, and his works shall follow him †. For there the wicked cease from troubling; there the weary are at rest §. There all distinctions of superiority will be laid aside, except it be that of true worth and merit. There shall the righteous live for ever, and sing praises unto God, saying, Blessing and honour, glory and power be unto him who sits upon the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever ||.

Let us then, thus encouraged, endeavour to attain to perfect holiness, in the fear of the Lord; that so, when he who is our light shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory.

* Heb. chap. x. ver. 34.

† 2 epist. Cor. chap. v. ver. 1.

‡ Rev. chap. xiv. ver. 13.

§ Job, chap. iii. ver. 17.

|| Rev. chap. v. ver. 13.

(52)

Sermon IV.

On the Resurrection, and the different
ends of good and bad Men.

Matt. chap. xiii. ver. 49, 50.

So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

AS the whole course of our Saviour's life was to do the will of him that sent him, so he continually employ'd himself in works of mercy, either to the bodies or souls of men, well knowing how grateful this practice was to his heavenly father: and in consequence of this, we can scarce look into one page of the four gospels, but we shall see our saviour described, as employing himself, in *healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, casting out devils,* or some such acts of kindness to his unworthy creatures. And as by his infinite wisdom, he knew how frail the unassisted nature of man is, and the continual need he has of fresh supplies of grace, so he was never wanting to them, in applying his divine counsel, either by precept or more influencing example; and when neither of

these methods would do, he then has recourse to that of reproofs. But here we must observe, how mild they are at all times; as, for instance, when the apostles could not understand one of his parables, he only reproves them by seeming to wonder at their ignorance; *Are ye also (says he) without understanding?* And when St. Peter would have come unto him on the water, and beginning to sink his heart failed him, he says to him, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* This was the way, by which the Saviour of the world brought the minds of illiterate and unbelieving Jews, to the knowledge of his gospel; leaving the ministers of his word an example, that they should follow his steps, and endeavour to make religion, and the way of salvation, at the same time both a pleasure and a duty.

In the chapter from whence the text is taken, we have several comparisons, to which the kingdom of heaven is likened; *To a sower of seed, and seed sown†. To a grain of mustard seed‡. To a piece of leaven§. To a treasure hid in a field||; and lastly, To a net cast into the sea, and gathering of fishes, both small and great¶; hereby hinting, that whoever is willing to embrace the Christian Religion, and to follow Christ, whether their capacities are small or great, the kingdom of heaven will receive them, even as a net does both the small and great fishes. But in the text, we must observe a parable, in which is shewn the separation of the good and bad fish; and to this*

* Matt. chap. xiv. ver. 31.

† Matt. chap. xiii. ver. 24.

‡ Mark, chap. iv. ver. 31.

§ Matt. chap. xiii. ver. 33.

|| Ibid. ver. 44.

¶ Ibid. ver. 47.

our Saviour compares the *end of the world*. So shall it be (says he, in the words of the text) at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just, as the fishermen were to separate the good from the bad fish: the one were to be put in vessels as good, and the other to be cast away; even so shall it be with the wicked, who shall most assuredly be separated and cast out of the kingdom of God. These things, we are told, were spoken to them in parables, to fulfil what the prophet David says, I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things, which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world*; from whence we may learn, that Christ came, as he tells us, to fulfil the law†; and that he was the person, of whom Moses in the law‡, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David§. And as it was he alone who could fulfil, and likewise abolish it||, by setting up in its room that most perfect law of liberty, his gospel¶; so are we now equally oblig'd to follow (and shall be equally condemned for the non-observance of) the duties of it; as those were whom he was preaching to, and who had previously been obliged to the ritual law of Moses. From the words of the text, I shall take occasion,

I. To prove the certainty of a resurrection, conveyed to us in the former part of the verse: So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.

II. To

* Matt. chap. xiii. ver. 35.

† Gen. chap. xlix. ver. 10.

‡ Deut. chap. xviii. ver. 18.

§ Isa. chap. vii. ver. 14.

|| John, chap. i. ver. 45.

¶ James chap. i. ver. 25.

II. To shew the *justice* of God in his procedure with the wicked, by making them like *the bad fish*, to be cast away; and shall cast them into *the fire*, where shall be *wailing and gnashing of teeth*.

III. To give a few *cautions and advice*, in some measure to enable us so to follow the footsteps of our *blessed master*, that we may *inherit eternal life*. Of these in their order.

I. First, then, I am to prove the certainty of a resurrection, which I shall do by considering the nature of man; as man is a being, who at his creation was endued with rational faculties and acting powers; a being dependent upon *the will of God* for every moment of his existence, and as it has pleased *Almighty God* to put all other creatures under his power*, and to make him, as it were, *lord over them*; so it is very consistent to suppose, that that God (who thus created him with these endowments, and in this capacity) should receive some account from him of his improvement of them; else, to what end is it that *man is not like the beasts that perish*†? To what end would all the promises both of the Old and New Testament have been? Why was it, think you, that *Christ was separated from his father, and that glory, which he had with him from the foundation of the world, and long before the world was*‡? To what end was he so evil intreated by his unworthy creatures, if not to rescue them from the pains of hell, which they could

* Gen. chap. i. ver. 26.

† John, chap. xviii. ver. 24.

‡ Psalm xlix. ver. 20.

could not suffer without deserving, and which they could not deserve without being accountable creatures; and such creatures, before whom life and death were set§, for them to chuse the one and refuse the other? Nor could they give any account of the deeds done in the body, without being raised from the dead, or being translated from earth to heaven, in like manner as Enoch was||. Again, since by our Saviour's dying and suffering, and his rising again, he typified and became the first fruits of our resurrection**, what room have we to doubt but that we shall also be raised, and be called upon to give an account of the actions done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil††? And have we not the words of Christ to assure us, that by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned‡‡, according to the nature of them, whether good or bad? And when can this be, seeing it is not now, that the wicked are punished according to their demerits, nor the righteous rewarded for their good deeds? When can it be, but at that great day, in which God has appointed to judge the world in righteousness, by that man Christ Jesus§§, to whom the father hath committed all judgment,|||| and whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead? When can it be, but at that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed*, and when our every action shall

§ Deut. chap. xxx. ver. 19.

|| Gen. chap. v. ver. 24.

** 1 epist. Cor. chap. xv. ver. 20.

†† 2 epist. Cor. chap. v. ver. 10.

†† Matt. chap. xii. ver. 37.

§§ Acts, chap. xvii. ver. 31.

|||| John, chap. v. ver. 22.

* 1 epist. Cor. chap. iv. ver. 5.

*shall receive a just recompence of reward**. St. Paul seems astonished to find (after he had proved that *Christ was risen*) any that should doubt of a resurrection of the dead; saying, *Now if Christ be preached unto you, that he rose from the dead; how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead†?* hinting at the Sadducees, who believed none, either of angel or spirit †. Then he goes on, declaring to them, that he himself should be a false witness of *Christ*, (if so be that the dead rise not) and that Christians, who have professed to believe in a crucified Saviour, are of all men the most miserable, in such a case; for then *Christ* cannot be risen himself, who (even as prejudiced writers allow ||) was really crucified, dead, and buried; and by this, the main pillar of Christianity itself, would be taken away. The Apostle goes on upbraiding them with their unbelief, and in his discourse before Agrippa, he questions him, saying, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead**?* as if he had said, can it be reasonable matter of unbelief, to conceive the same exertion of an almighty power, in raising the dead bodies of men, which we daily see such repeated instances of in the vegetative world? An example of which, he gives them in a grain of wheat|||.

Besides, a resurrection is very evident, from the bare words of the text; *The angels shall come forth at the end of the world, and sever the wicked from among the just*, which they could not do, if they

* Luke, chap. xiv. ver. 14.

† 1 epist. Cor. chap. xv. ver. 12.

‡ Acts, chap. xxiii. ver. 8.

§ 1 epist. Cor. chap. xv. ver. 19.

|| Vide Ancient History, vol. x. p. 614.

** Acts, chap. xxvi. ver. 8.

||| 1 ep. Cor. c. xv. ver. 36, 37.

they were not both raised, to give them an opportunity of so doing. After this he goes on with boldness, and triumphantly asserts, that, *Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept**. And a sad sleep it would have been indeed, if the *righteous*, after all their laborious striving to attain to a mastery over their passion; if after all their conflicts with *the world, the flesh, and the devil*, they were to have no reward; if, when all the day long, *they had been labouring in the vineyard, and had borne the burthen and heat* † thereof, they should miss of their hire; if after the many tedious anxieties which they had undergone, and the ill treatment they had met with in the world; if (I say) after all this, they should find death to be only a gate to close their existence and their sufferings together, and not a gate to open to them eternal life, and to let them into *an inheritance incorruptible, and full of glory, eternal in the heavens*, which they have been always induced to believe in, and hope for; if it were so, then indeed the *wicked* might triumph in this their day, and might then insult the *righteous*, for their *cleansing their hearts, and washing their hands in innocency* ‡, in vain, and for denying themselves every desire of the flesh, for no end at all. But this cannot be, because it would be inconsistent with the *justice and goodness of God*: and if there be but a mere possibility (instead of the clearest and fullest evidence) of a resurrection, yet in such case, the *wicked man* would act foolishly, in

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* 1 epist. Cor. chap. xv. ver. 20.

† Matt. chap. xx. ver. 12.
‡ Psalm lxxiii. ver. 13.

living as if there were none; because, should his expectations be baulked, and when he dies, should he find himself arraigned by God, and called upon to give up his accounts; how amazed and astonished must he be to find himself condemned, and cast away as the *bad fish*. David seems to hint at this, when he says, speaking of the *prosperity of the wicked*, that he *thought to understand it, but it was too hard for him**, 'till he came into the *sanctuary of the Lord*, and then understood he the end of these *men*; then he found, that *the way of the wicked is as darkness†*, and that they know not at what they stumble. But, on the contrary, the *righteous shall be comforted‡*, to find that their righteousness shall be clear as the *light*, and their just dealings as the *noon-day*. Even then, when the strictest scrutiny shall be made, and the *secret councils of God*, in regard to his distributions here below, shall be disclosed, when *every one shall receive a just recompence of reward§*. Seeing, therefore, *these things are so*, let us be *stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know, that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord||*.

2dly. As God is, in his own nature, nothing less than an eternal self-existent, perfect being; and in our creation could have no other view than the happiness of his creatures, both here and hereafter, he most certainly did intend, at man's first creation, to make him thus happy here,

* Psalm lxxiii. ver. 15, 16.

† Prov. chap. iv. ver. 19.

‡ Psalm xxxvii. ver. 6.

§ Heb. chap. xi. ver. 26.

|| 1 epist. Cor. chap. xv. verse 58.

here, by the possession of every thing which his natural desires (before the fall) prompted him to, (for then he had not a want left unsupplied, because he acted in every thing in conformity to the dignity of his nature, and desired nothing but what tended to the glory of his creator) and hereafter, by admitting him to never-ending bliss, (without passing thro' the gate of death) as far as was consistent with the moral self-agency and liberty of man; but since, by the abuse of this liberty, came death, and by the original sin of our first parents, man was doom'd to return again to the dust from whence he came, as he is told in part of the sentence pass'd upon him, *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return**: in consequence whereof, there then began a general convulsion throughout all nature; and the whole universe, in order to bring about this effect, suffer'd a surprising shock. God represents himself as griev'd that he made man, and the earth also, which before spontaneously brought forth every thing in its originally design'd perfection, is now curs'd by a spurious production of weeds, &c. which seems, by degrees, to have wrought such an effect upon the constitutions of our *first* parents, as to render them mortal: every thing suffers by this their offence: man, who lived in innocence, convers'd with angels, and had nothing to disturb his divine employ of worshipping his creator, is now drove out, *to till the ground, to live by the sweat of his bones*, to have his days shortened, and to be hourly approaching towards his dissolution.

After this, we are told, in process of time, God renewed a covenant with Noah, and in him, with all the posterity of Adam*; and tho' man had perverted his ways afresh, and incurred the displeasure of the most highest by renewed provocations, yet such was the goodness of the Almighty, that he still withheld his hand from punishing, and would not utterly destroy, but found out a means of rewarding such his faithful servants, who should keep his laws, and walk in the way of his commandments, by sending his son into the world, that by his death he might save a lost world. This office, in the greatness of his mercy and amazing condescension, he both freely undertook, and in compliance with his heavenly father's will accomplish'd; which (had he only died) could not have been effected: there must have been a resurrection too, that he might by conquering hell, the grave, and all the powers of darkness, shew us, how we, by patient continuance in well-doing, may also attain to the resurrection of the just. Thus, as by man came death, so also by the death and resurrection of the man Christ Jesus, came also the resurrection of the dead, or an assurance of it; For as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive†. Thus much for the proof of the resurrection from the words of the text, *So shall it be at the end of the world*, and so on. I shall consider the words,

II. Secondly, by shewing, as I proposed, how very consistent it is with the justice of God to cast

* Gen. chap. ix. ver. 8. † 1 epist. Cor. chap. xv. ver. 22.

cast away *the wicked as the bad fish* are cast away; for if, after he has made such overtures of mercy, and hath given us hope in the death and resurrection of *CHRIST*: if after this we reject his mercy, and challenge his word, wherein he assures us, we shall rise from the dead: if we still remain in impenitence and unbelief, and after he has by so many undoubted proofs and testimonies already given to several of *the Jews*, and his own *Apostles*; (inso-much that when one of them who through slowness of heart to believe, had the condescension allow'd him of a sensible *touch*, and by that was assur'd, that *Christ* was the same *lord*, in whom he partly believed before his death. If, I say, after all these testimonies, any one can be so perverse as to deny or dispute these things; it is, and will be most just in *God*, to shew him his errors at the last day, by punishing his infidelity: for to be sure he must want a greater conviction than the appearance of an angel, who can still remain in unbelief of these truths: for if such testimony will not convince him, what will? if the testimony of above five hundred brethren at once, that *Christ* is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto many will not gain their assent; even a spirit from the dead, would bring with it no force, towards their conviction; and they will undoubtedly be met by *Christ*, at the last day, to their astonishment; and shall then most severely feel the truth laid down, and too too experimentally find, what they now are so loth to believe, that they are *accountable creatures*. And why is it, that they are so loth to believe these

these things, but because they think, or at least hope, that if they are not persuaded of these truths, they never shall be called in question, or subject to punishment, for not living up to such belief: but, alas! they will find this a fatal mistake, when they shall (contrary to their expectations) be roused by the sound of the trump, at the last day: I believe, they will then wish, they had hearkened to the dictates of God's word, and and had been led to assent thereto, by the persuasions of his *ministers*, or other *advocates* for his *gospel*: they will then find, that if the word spoken by angels, being rejected, was punished with nothing less, than fire and brimstone to consume it's adversaries, (as was the case of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*) those shall be punished with much sorer punishment, who cast behind them the word of the *Son of God* himself, who openly declared, that he was, *the resurrection, the truth, and the life**, that *whoever believed on him, tho' he were dead, yet should he live*, and that *whoever lived and believed on him should not dye, but have everlasting life*: thus much for the proof of the *doctrine*, from the words of the *text*, whence the necessity of a resurrection has been fully prov'd, from the nature of man, and the justice of God: and having shewn the reasonableness of believing and expecting this great day; it only remains, that I offer this one consideration more; namely, that in case it were possible (either from the nature of God or man) this doctrine should be false, yet the living in the belief of it will be somewhat inductive to the well-being of mankind:

* John, chap. xi. ver. 25, 26.

kind: because as long as a man believes, he is an *accountable creature*, he will live in some measure agreeable to such belief; and tho' it does put a restraint (as I have said) on many of the projects of the wicked, yet as the indulging of all the sensual appetites to excess, are commonly deem'd hurtful to our bodily health, so I hope it will be allow'd, that upon the whole, to abate somewhat of those lengths, which the wicked man runs in pursuit of vice, will not be really detrimental to his well-being here.

And again, as God has placed his good creatures here for man's use, so undoubtedly he did not do it to tantalize him, and to hinder his enjoying them with moderation and gratitude. It is the abuse of them that will be blamed at the last day. It will be our unthankfulness for benefits received, and our refusing to use the means of grace, and the helps we have, that will then make us be deemed *as the bad fish*, and prove the means of our being *cast away at the day of judgment*. Tho' the disciples of Christ are not to be revengeful and lascivious, as the votaries of a warlike Mars or a lustful Venus: tho' there is a woe denounced against *whoremongers and adulterers**, yet we may return injuries by reproof, which is good for evil, and may *drink wine*†, and *eat of the fat of the land, which the Lord our God has given us*‡, in such proportions as is necessary for the support of our weak natures. Our Saviour restrains us from nothing that is good for us: but to obtain these blessings we must believe

* Heb. chap. xiii. ver. 4.

† Gen. chap. xlv. ver. 18.

‡ Deut. chap. xxxii. ver. 14.

lieve in him, and ask them of the father in his name*; for he says, *Whatever ye ask the father in my name, believing, ye shall receive*; and when we have them, we must minister of our abundance towards supplying the wants of our indigent brethren†; a breach of charity being above all things what will be least dispensed with.

I would, before I conclude this head, beg leave to observe somewhat in regard to the persons employ'd in this work of severing the wicked, &c. We are told, *the angels shall come forth*; and very proper persons sure they are for such a purpose, who (doubtless) have been from time to time as so many *ministring spirits* to dictate to our consciences; or who have been in our lifetime, as it were, *guardians* over us: for altho' what David says‡, and St. Matthew§, *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone*, be more immediately meant of our Saviour, yet, no doubt, we are in some proportion guarded by them; and not only guarded, but instructed too; for any thing that we can tell to the contrary: not that I would suppose them by this to be any way assisting to God, who could by the divine impulse of his spirit work upon our minds, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure; nor would I be hereby understood to derive any other honour to the *angels*, than what the words imply, or by any means lead any to think them *adorable*, who are only *ministerial*, (for this would be to lead them into sin) as one of the *angels* themselves

* Matt. chap. xxi. ver. 22.

† 1 epist. Pet. chap. iv. ver. 8.

‡ Psalm xci. ver. 11.

§ Matt. chap. iv. ver. 6.

Selves testified unto St. John||, when he forbade his worshipping him, saying, *See thou do it not, for I also am thy fellow-servant: worship God**. But yet, notwithstanding this, as it is the will of our heavenly father, that none of his little ones should *perish*†, so likewise this employ cannot but be very delightful to those glorified spirits, whether they are composed of *just men made perfect*, or whether they are such, who have from their first creation been continually in the presence of God, and who might have this province assigned to them of going to and fro in the earth, seeking whom they might save from destruction.

Again, supposing them such as have ministered to us their aid and assistance, they are in another sense also proper for this purpose of *separation* at the last day; because they will, doubtless, know when and wherein we may have particularly given into, or resisted the force of their endeavours; and in such cases may not only prove *separatists*, but *witnesses* and *vouchers* also.

I come now to make an application; and

1. First, since we know that we are created not to dwell always here, let the consideration of our dissolution make us walk warily and circumspectly, and be careful in our behaviour and actions, to moderate our passions, and govern our appetites with an absolute sway, and *bring every thought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ*‡; to that law, by which we are to be judged, and whereby we shall be accused or approved of at the last day.

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|| Rev. cxap. xix. ver. 10.

* Ibid. chap. xxii. ver. 8, 9.

† Matt. chap. xviii. ver. 14.

‡ 2 epist. Cor. chap. x. ver. 5.

2. Secondly, as we have seen the certainty of a resurrection, and that we must be judged or condemned hereafter, as we demean ourselves here, (well knowing, that *as the tree falls, so it must lie*, or, in other words, that *as death leaves us, so judgment must find us*) let us beg of God, that he would afford us his grace, and so influence our minds by it, that *when he shall appear in power and majesty, to judge both the quick and dead, by that man whom he hath ordained, the man Christ Jesus*, we may be by him acquitted, and *enter into the joys of his rest.*

3. Thirdly, *seeing thus the terrours of the lord*, let us be warned to *put off the old man, with the affections and lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds**, that we may follow after righteousness, walk in the ways of God's laws, and be always working out our salvation with fear and trembling, that at the last day we may have boldness in appearing before God, and may, through the merits of Christ's death and resurrection, be seal'd unto everlasting life.

4. Fourthly, as we have sundry talents, many acting faculties, and moral liberty, let us be continually endeavouring after the improvement of them, striving to attain such a perfection in righteousness, that we may be able to say at the last day; behold, Lord, here are the talents thou hast entrusted us with in some measure improved by us.

5. Fifthly, as by a proper reflection we must see the Uncertainty of all sublunary enjoyments, let us endeavour to shake off our inclinations for them:

* Eph. chap. iv. ver. 22, 23.

them: let us not rise up early to follow strong drink, and continue until night, till wine enflame us*. Let us not be so anxious (as most are) to join house to house, and field to field, till there be no place that we may be placed alone in the midst of the earth†, because these actions will not bear the test at the last day; and after we have given a loose to our appetites and passions, we shall then with grief remember, that God has denounced a woe against them by his prophet‡.

And if we do thus rejoice in the days of our youth§, we shall, when we arrive at the confines of the grave, find that for all these things, God will bring us unto judgment, and it will not then be enough to say to God, have we not done such and such good actions in thy name, to gain us admittance into heaven. No! it must be a well-grounded faith in Christ, productive of good works, (and not a presumptive one) which will render us acceptable to God. It will then be those only, who have done his will, that shall be made partakers of his everlasting rest. Then will Antimonianism be of no avail, for we must then shew we had faith productive of works.

6. Sixthly, as we see those proceedings will be the result of God's unerring justice, and the eternal rectitude of his most wise resolves; since we must know, that when he comes to judge us, we shall have nothing to say for ourselves, but must stand convicted of the justice, even of a miserable sentence, let the thought of everlasting burnings, of a never-dying worm, of a lake of fire

* Isa. chap. v. ver. 11.

† Ibid. ver. 8.

‡ Vid. loc. ant. cit.

§ Eccles. chap. xi. ver. 9.

fire and brimstone, be always present in our minds, to rouse us from our sins. For though, I think, there is great reason to doubt, (as we are not absolutely ascertain'd) of the *materiality* of *hell torments*, yet surely the resemblances given us are design'd as most awful, lively, and affecting representations to our senses to deter us; and we may be sure, that let the species of our punishment be what it will, material or not, yet it will in severity answer every idea convey'd to us by those dismal metaphors.

But to leave this melancholy prospect, let us now turn our thoughts to the blessed hope of everlasting life, and the eternal rewards which are promised to our accepted (tho' imperfect) obedience. And let this more cheering and delightful prospect stir us up to aim at perfection; so that although we cannot be so entirely perfect, as we could wish to be, yet doing as much as we can, we may, whether we were called first or last into *Christ's vineyard**, receive the reward with those who *have borne the heat and burthen of the day* ||: for God does not require more from us, than he gives us abilities to perform. Let us *strive* then to enter in at the *strait gate*, be earnest in our applications to the throne of grace, for assistance, that we may be able *so to fight, as to obtain*; so to believe, that through our faith we may be saved; and may so prepare our selves to meet our lord, at the day of judgment, that when *the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just*,
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* Matt. chap. xx. ver. 12.

|| Ibid.

we may be deemed as the good fish, fit to be preserved, may be called the beloved and blessed of the lord; and as such may have an entrance ministered unto us abundantly, into the joys of our masters rest.

Of the appearance of Christ, and the
 sufficiency of his satisfaction.

Sermon V

Heb. chap. ix. part of the 13th verse.
 But more need in the rest of the world, hath he ap-
 peared to put us () full by the sacrifice of
 himself.

In the beginning of this chapter, St. Paul
 gives us an account of the rites and bloody
 sacrifices of the Jewish law, and shews the
 great veneration that was paid to the two taber-
 nacles, one of which was called the holy of ho-
 lies, into which none were permitted to enter,
 but the high priest only, and he but once a year,
 there to make an offering of blood, for his own
 sins; and the sins of the people: (for then with-
 out shedding of blood, there was no remission
 of sins.) This ceremony of sacrificing, as well as
 all the Jewish ones he tells us, were only figura-
 tively intended, to typify the great and interior
 sacrifice of the Son of God. And he goes on
 putting the hyperbole in almost every verse of
 this chapter, and in the text assures us, that Christ
 hath once appear'd (both to still and abolish
 these rites) in the end of the world, to put away
 by the sacrifice of himself, before I proceed
 further.

Sermon V.

Of the appearance of Christ, and the
sufficiency of his satisfaction.

Heb. chap. ix. part of the 26th verse.

But now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.

IN the beginning of this chapter, St. Paul gives us an account of the rites and bloody sacrifices of the jewish law, and shews the great veneration that was paid to the two tabernacles, one of which was called the holy of holies, into which none were permitted to enter, but the high priest only, and he but once a year, there to make an offering of blood, for his own sins, and the sins of the people: (for then without shedding of blood, there was no remission of sins.) This ceremony of sacrificing, as well as all the jewish ones he tells us, were only figuratively intended, to typify the great and meretorious sacrifice of the son of God. And he goes on pursuing the hyperbole in almost every verse of this chapter, and in the text assures us, that Christ hath once appear'd (both to fulfil and abolish these ties) in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself: before I proceed
further

further to discourse upon these words; I shall examine what analogy these types bore to our Saviour, and how they were fulfilled in his sacrifice. And,

1. First, the tabernacle was an emblem of heaven, the holy of holies, into which the high priest only was permitted to enter.

2. Secondly, the high priest typified our Saviour, who is now enter'd into heaven, to offer up his intercession for us.

3. Thirdly, the sacrifice of blood, which was offered up, was a lively representation of the blood shedding of the son of God.

4. Fourthly, that without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sins, plainly shew'd the wrath of God against sin; and that nothing less than the unspotted lamb Christ Jesus, (prefigur'd by the paschal lamb, which was to be unspotted) being slain, could expiate and atone for the world's transgressions.

5. Fifthly, God Almighty's being graciously pleas'd to accept the sacrifice then offer'd, is an assurance to us, that the perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, was accepted by him, as an atonement, for the sins of the whole world: this being premis'd, I shall, from the words of the text, do these four things.

First. Endeavour to prove the apostles assertion, viz. that Christ hath once appeared.

Secondly. Consider the end for which he did appear, namely, to put away sin. But now once hath he appear'd to put away sin.

Thirdly. Shew the manner how he was to put it away, viz. by the sacrifice of himself. And,

Fourthly.

Fourthly. Prove (as well as I am able) the sufficiency of this sacrifice of Christ (being but once offer'd) to the end propos'd, the putting away sin. But now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

First. Then, I am to prove the truth of the apostle's assertion, that Christ hath appear'd. St. John tells us, that when Philip saw Nathanael, he said unto him, we have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph*. Nathanael, wondring to find any good thing come out of Nazareth, says to Philip, can any good thing come out of Nazareth†? whereupon being very much intreated, and at last prevail'd upon by Philip to satisfy himself with an ocular demonstration, he is soon brought to confess in Christ, and own him to be both the son of God and king of Israel. St. Matthew evidences this point further; for he speaking of his abode, says, that he came and dwelt in a city call'd Nazareth‡; that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. Again, we have the assertion of God himself, at our Saviour's baptism, where we are told, the holy ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove, accompanied with a voice from heaven, which declared Christ to be the beloved son, in whom God was well pleased||. Simeon in his inspired Song, says that his eyes had seen God's salvation**; and being full of

* John, chap. i. ver. 45.

† Ibid. ver. 46.

‡ Chap. ii. ver. 23.

|| Matt. chap. iii. ver. 16, 17.

** Luke, chap. ii. ver. 30.

the holy ghost, he confesses, that he was the promis'd light, which was to lighten the gentiles, and to be the glory of God's people Israel†. Zacharias also transported with a holy extasy, at the birth of John (who, as a fore-runner of Christ, was to carry the glad tidings of great joy‡, namely that God had visited and redeem'd his people, and had rais'd up an horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which had been since the world began) declares this event to be the fulfilling of God's promises made unto their forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

Again, another proof of this, is, the meanness of Christ's birth and parentage, which, together with the severity of his life, plainly shews that he was the despised and rejected of men, the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, whom Isaiah speaks of§.

The expectations the Jews had of a temporal prince is no objection to this, because they are without sufficient grounds from the Old Testament, in which the coming of Christ is foretold, as of one, who had no form or comeliness, nor should we see any beauty in him, that we should desire him on that account. He is there foretold, to be afflicted, griev'd, and oppress'd; and who ever answer'd these melancholy descriptions in so ample a manner as did the blessed Jesus, the Saviour of the world? We may add to this, as another proof, the painful death, the buffet-

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† Luke, chap. ii: ver. 32.

‡ Luke, chap. i. ver. 67.

§ Chap. liii, ver. 4.

ing and reviling, the scorn and spitting which he met with; and we shall find him in these respects also to answer another prophecy, in which he is said to have given his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair*. That the ploughers plow'd upon his back, and made long their furrows†. The time also, in which he suffer'd these things, shew'd him to be the Messias; for in that year, Ananias prophesied that some one should die for the people; which our Saviour did, and so fulfilled Gabriel's prediction to Daniel‡, concerning the seventy weeks of years, which were to be accomplished before the coming of Christ; and these, corresponding with the seven sabbaths of years mentioned by Moses§, amounted to 490 years, which was exactly the difference from the time of the prophecy, to the time when the Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself: a prophecy, the clearest of any we have in all the Old Testament, relative to our Saviour's coming. The jealousy of Herod on this occasion, when he sent the wise men into the east||, to find out the babe Christ Jesus, and the fierceness of his wrath, in endeavouring to kill him, when he found himself deceiv'd by those Eastern sages, is a strong proof of his being that root of Jesse foretold to come, and that righteous branch, which was to be fix'd in David¶¶.

The many visions of the wise men, the shepherds, and Joseph; the star which was fix'd in

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* Isa. chap. l. ver. 6.

† Psalm cxxix. ver. 3.

‡ Dan. chap. ix. ver. 24.

§ Lev. chap. xxv. ver. 8.

|| Matt. chap. ii. ver. 8 to 15.

¶¶ Isa. chap. xi. ver. 10. Jer. chap. xxiii. ver. 5.

the east to direct their course, are such unanswerable evidences of the truth of this, that one would imagine it impossible any should be so wilfully blind and ignorant, as to persist in an opposition to the belief of them: for how wonderfully did God interpose for his preservation, while in his infancy, by humane means! such as flight and banishment from Bethlehem to Egypt||, and back again. What testimony did he himself give to the unbelieving Jews, that he was the Christ? not only by the assurance of his sacred word, but also by working such miracles, as (they themselves confess'd) never man did. The high-priests also had a jealousy concerning him, saying, If we let him alone, all men will believe on him*; and in another place, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles†. And in consequence of this their jealousy, they were always plotting against him: but all their efforts proved in vain, for he was that very prophet, the anointed of God, the holy one of Israel, the prince of peace, the advocate, the priest of good things to come‡. This, I say, was he that came, both to destroy and fulfil the law: and therefore in vain were all their endeavours, and their malice could have no effect upon him, 'till the fullness of time was come, in which he was to be betray'd, and by the hands of sinful men, crucified and slain.

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|| Matt. chap. ii. ver. 14.

* John, chap. xi. ver. 48.

† Ibid. ver. 47.

‡ Luke, c. i. v. 76. Isa. c. lxi. v.

1. Ibid. c. xli. v. 14. Ibid.

c. ix. v. 6. 1 ep. John, c. ii.

v. 1. Heb. c. ix. v. 11.

I cannot dismiss this head, without a further examination of the coherence of the Old and New Testament in this matter, because nothing less than salvation is built upon, a strong faith that God did send his son into the world to save mankind: and this faith cannot be better raised, than by shewing that whatever was foretold of Christ, came to pass. The law and the gospel tally exactly, the one in foretelling, the other in fulfilling, every thing relative to him. For, of his birth, the law says, he was born of the seed of Abraham, and of David, and of the stem of Jesse*. Now to the fulfilling of these, the gospel declares him to be the son of David and Abraham†. The law says he was to be born of a virgin; Behold! a virgin shall conceive and bear a son‡. The gospel tells us that Mary, a virgin, brought forth a son§. The law says, he was to be born at Bethlehem Ephratah; But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, tho' thou be little among the thousands of Judah, (that is, tho' thou art in number one of the most despicable tribes) yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting||. In proof of this, St. Matthew** assures us, that Jesus was born at Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod. The prophet Hosea†† mentions, that he was to be brought out of Egypt, saying, When Israel was a child, then I lov'd him, and called my

* Gen. c. xxii. v. 18. 2 Sam. c. vii. v. 12. Isa. c. xi. v. 1.

† Matt. chap. i. ver. 1.

‡ Isa. chap. vii. ver. 14.

§ Matt. c. i. v. 18. Luke, c. i. v. 31, 35. Luke, c. ii. v. 6, 7.

|| Micah, chap. v. ver. 2.

** Chap. ii. ver. 1.

†† Chap. xi. ver. 1.

my son out of Egypt. And how exactly parallel is the gospel * to this, where the angel, we are told, appeared unto Joseph in a dream, after the death of Herod, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. The law said, that one should go before the Messiah; Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in †. It is also said that this messenger should cry in the wilderness ||: the gospel ** tells us that John Baptist did so before Christ. The law foretold that he should preach the gospel of salvation in Galilee, which sitting before in darkness should see a great light ††. The gospel †† tells us that Jesus did so preach, and is declared to be the light which was to come into the world. The law that in the Messiah's days, the eyes of the blind should be opened, and the deaf ears should be unstopped; the lame should leap; and the tongue of the dumb sing §§. The gospel ||||, that it was so in the days of Jesus Christ. We are told, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come *†: and it is plain there has been no political government these seventeen hundred years; neither has there been among them any lawgiver, or sceptre sway'd in Judah, which

* Matt. c. ii. v. 19, 20.

† Mal. c. iii. v. i.

Luke, c. i. v. 76, 77.

Ibid. c. vii. v. 27.

¶ Isa. chap. xl. ver. 3.

** Matt. c. iii. v. 1, 3. Mark,
c. iii. v. 2, 3.

†† Isa. c. ix. v. 2.

‡‡ Matt. c. iv. v. 12 and 23.

§§ Isa. c. xxxv. v. 6.

|||| Matt. c. iv. v. 23. c. xi. v. 5.

*† Gen. chap. xlix. ver. 10.

which are clear evidences, either that these prophecies and their expectations were false, or else that the Messiah (or Shiloh) came into the world so many ages since, and confirm'd the truth of them. So likewise it was foretold, that the glory of the second temple should be greater than the glory of the former*. Now how should this be, since the Jews themselves confess, there were five of the principal glories of the first wanting in the second temple, to wit, 1st. The ark, with the mercy seat and cherubims. 2dly. The shechinah, or divine presence. 3dly. The holy prophetic spirit. 4thly. The urim and thummim, by which they mean (as I apprehend) that there was no immediate answer given in material cases. 5thly. The heavenly fire which came down from heaven on the altar, and was there always kept alive by the priest, and never suffer'd to go out; and was wont to consume the offer'd sacrifices. And what, I would ask, could compensate for the loss or deprivation of all these, but some extraordinary event, such as was Christ's so frequently honouring the latter with his presence? and by that it was fully done, since he was all these: "He was the ark of God's renewed covenant, and was himself the seat of mercy. "He was the shechinah, or divine presence itself. He was the true anointed prophet of God, and so in him was the true prophetic spirit in the highest degree. He was the urim and thummim, the only one to be apply'd to to know God's will. And he was, lastly, the heavenly fire that came down to consume those
sins

* Haggai, chap. ii. ver. 9.

“ fins we would sacrifice to God, and continue
 “ ally burns with the flames of all-merciful love
 “ to his creatures.”

It would indeed be endless, and a work too large for this design, to expatiate upon, and enumerate all the passages which might be brought to prove that Christ is the Messiah, and that he is come; and therefore I hope what hath been said will be sufficient to confirm the assertion of the apostle, that he is come, or hath appeared; on which account I shall proceed to shew,

Secondly, That the end for which he came was to put away sin; But now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin.

1st. As Adam by his fall was subjected to the curse of death, and to a privation of all those blessings which God originally intended him, so in consequence of this his disobedience, the whole race of men were liable to death; but it pleased God to find out some way to deliver them from the punishment of eternal death in the other world, by thus sending his son to put away sin.

2dly. As man by Adam's transgression was rendered imperfect, had all his faculties vitiated, and his reason impaired, and was become sinful, it was impossible he should make sufficient atonement to the anger and justice of Almighty God; for in him all had sinned, and had so perverted their ways, that God is represented as repenting himself that he made man; It repenteth*

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* Gen. chap. vi. ver. 6.

me, saith the Almighty, that I made man. But after he had made him, he was willing to find out some way to satisfy his justice, consistent with his mercy; and so, when the fulness of time was come, he sent his son to seek and to save that world which was lost. He sent him, that whosoever believeth on him might have life thro' his name.

3dly. That God should create man out of nothing, by giving motion to that which was inert, and grant him the opportunity of a covenant, was an amazing act of love; but that when man had forfeited this part of the covenant, God should renew it to him by so great a pledge as the death of his son, was so stupendous an instance of that love, that even the angels were not able to conceive right apprehensions of it.

1st. Here the amazing love of God the son also appears, that he himself would come; herein his unbounded and inimitable humility is conspicuous; that he who was the express image of his father, the only-begotten, well-beloved son*, who had the greatest glory with him, before the world was, should condescend to be clothed with our mortality; that he, who by the equality and joint exertion of his power made heaven and earth, should submit to come and dwell among us†; that he, who was the wonderful counsellor, the mighty god, the everlasting father, the prince of peace‡, should come down from heaven, and take our nature upon him; and having so done, that he who was perfect God and perfect man§,

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who

* Heb. chap. i. ver. 3.

† John, chap. i. ver. 2.

‡ Isa. chap. ix. ver. 6.

§ Heb. chap. v. ver. 9.

who knew no sin, and in whose mouth was found no guile ||, should vouchsafe to be made sin for us, and satisfy his father's anger for our sakes, and in our stead; and, to heighten all, did not suffer these things immediately from his father, but was crucified and slain, spit upon and reviled, by those creatures whom he could have commanded out of being by the breath of his mouth: all this is a convincing proof of his affectionate regard to men; and yet he submitted to all this, in compliance with his father's will, as it is written of him, I come to do thy will, O God: which will of his father was, that he should put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.

2dly. This love is inimitable in this respect, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, as St. Paul expresses it; for a good man some would even dare to die*. But God has commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us; which great love the apostle improves to this purpose, bidding us hope in him, that as he has justified us by his blood, so we shall be saved from the wrath to come thro' him †.

Thus we see, that the end for which Christ came was to put away the sins of many, and free them from the punishment of them ‡; that he took upon him our nature, came down from heaven, left the bosom of his father §, and all that glory, into which he so earnestly desires to be reinstated**, for no other end but to appease his father's justice, and to induce him to turn in mercy

|| 1 epist. Pet. chap. ii. ver. 22.

* Rom. chap. v. ver. 7, 8.

† Ibid. ver. 9.

‡ John, chap. i. ver. 14.

§ Ibid. ver. 18.

** John, chap. xvii. ver. 5.

mercy towards us, to blot out our transgressions, and to remember our sins and our iniquities no more ††. He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, that he might be the better acquainted with the temptations which that state was liable to, might the better know how to apply his divine counsels and reproofs, and thereby more effectually prove himself the Saviour of our souls. I shall now,

Thirdly, Consider the way by which Christ was to put away sin, namely, by the sacrifice of himself. And as there was only one person in the world that could do this work for us, of justifying us before God, so we may apprehend it to be effected in this or the like manner. The son of God in and of himself, was, as St. John testifies of him ‡‡, perfectly co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with the father, and therefore could not in any sort be bound to do more than the father himself, and, in consequence, whatsoever he should do, might justly be esteemed a work of free grace; which, without any violence to the divine justice, might be set to the account of some other person or persons, even such, whom he (i. e.) the son should be pleased to do it for: and hereupon, out of mercy and compassion to fallen man, he covenants with his father, that if it pleased his majesty to accept it, as done from man, he would take upon him the suffering of those punishments which were due to man upon his disobedience, and the performance of those duties, which were due from

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†† Heb. chap. ii. ver. 16.

‡‡ John, chap. x. ver. 30.

man to God; upon condition, that whatsoever he should thus humble himself to do or suffer, should wholly be upon the account of mankind, and for their benefit; he being obliged essentially in himself to do no more in time, than he was in eternity. This gracious condescension, and merciful motion, God the father, out of the riches of his tender mercies, was pleased to consent to, and hereupon the son (as I have before proved) blending our nature with his deity, became subject and obedient both to the moral and ceremonial law of his father, and at last to the death upon the cross; thus sacrificing himself for our sakes, that we might become the children of God, and be made heirs of eternal life thro' him.

Now in this sacrifice and humiliation, he paid a twofold obedience to the law of his father, an active and a passive. An active, in that he fulfilled all righteousness, and a passive, in that he became sin for us, and a sacrifice to his father's wrath, that he might expiate that guilt, which no other sacrifice could do. He laid down his life willingly, as he assures us in that comparison he makes of himself to a good shepherd; I am the good shepherd, who lay down my life for the sheep: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*. This commandment he received of the father, as he tells us in the latter part of the verse; and hence we may draw these comfortable conclusions.

1st. That

* John, chap. x. ver. 14 to 19,

1st. That as God the father gave him this power and commandment, and as God the son willingly submitted to give up himself a sacrifice for us, so we shall be justified by his death.

2dly. That as God the son fulfilled all the righteousness expected at first of man, and also suffered all the punishments due to man's transgressions, as our sins were thus imputed to him, and he bore them in his own body upon the cross; so we shall receive the unspeakable blessing of having his righteousness imputed unto us, as the apostle tells us*.

I would here observe, that the word commandment mentioned to be received of Christ from the father, no way lessens the godhead of the son; for this only regards his human suffering nature, which he was pleased to take upon him, and as God equally commanded with the father. This I mention to obviate any objection which a deistical mind may raise on the bare letter of the text, last cited from St. John: and this appears plain from another scripture, where our Saviour says, I and my father are one†; which could not be, were there such a superiority in the one, as justly to lay a command upon the other; tho' the words may also with propriety be taken to signify an unity of design, in the œconomy of man's salvation.

Fourthly. I come now to consider, under the fourth head, the perfection of this sacrifice, and to shew how sufficient it was by being but once offered to the end proposed, the putting away
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* 1 epist. Cor. chap. i. ver. 30.

† John, chap. x. ver. 30.

fin: but now once, in the end of the world; hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. And this sufficiency will be best illustrated, by considering the weakness and insufficiency of all other sacrifices offered under the Jewish dispensation. As the Jewish law, when it was in force, obliged several sacrifices to be offered, for almost every transgression, so we see the Jews were continually offering peace-offerings to the Almighty; sometimes of their goods, at other times of their cattle, the firstlings of their flocks, the first fruits of their grounds, &c. and for expiatory sacrifices, slain bulls, he-goats, and the like. These things were done,

1st. To bring the Jews off from their idolatries in Egypt, and also to intimate to us, the necessity of appeasing God's wrath against sin. But these were only shadows of good things to come: vain and fruitless were they towards the entire expiation of the guilt of the whole world, or to take away the sins of mankind: had there been no other than these, those who were filthy, would have been filthy still*; because these were to be perpetually offered, and were only as a continual remembrance of sins once a year; stood only in meats and drinks, in divers washings and carnal ordinances, impos'd on them till the time of reformation†; but now Christ being come, an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, than that in which these sacrifices were offered, hath himself made an offering for a thorough expiation, and a perpetual cleansing of the whole race

* Rev. chap. xxii. ver. 11.

Heb. chap. ix. ver. 10 to 15.

race of men from all their sins; and that not by the blood of bulls, and of goats and calves, but by his own bloodshed it is that he has purchased eternal redemption for all those who believe in his name. Thus he became both a mediator of the new covenant, for the redemption of them who were under the law, and also to provide, that they which are, or might hereafter be called, may receive the promise and reward of eternal life thro' him. And herein,

2dly. Secondly, does this sacrifice appear satisfactory, that it needed but once to be offer'd, to be sufficiently expiatory towards the purifying of our souls, and making us heirs of the promises. We are now sanctified by the offering of the body and blood of Christ, once for all. Seeing then these things are so, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God; let us walk circumspectly, not as fools, but wise*: because tho' God the son did die for us, to save us from the curse of Adam's transgression, and our own involuntary infirmities, and to admit us, upon repentance, to the pardon even of wilful sins, yet if we too boldly depend, or too greatly rely on the promises made thro' him, lead wicked lives, and go on in a continued course of wickedness and presumption; this will be doing despite unto that spirit of grace, which should seal us to the day of redemption†: and in such case, not even the perfect sacrifice of the immaculate lamb of Christ Jesus‡, will avail any thing towards

* Ephes. chap. v. ver. 15.

† Heb. chap. x. ver. 29.

| ‡ Ephes. chap. iv. ver. 30.

towards our salvation: for tho' 'tis true that he came to die for sinners; yet he did not come to encourage man in sin: his promises were to the contrite soul, and to hinder the well-meaning Christian from despair, and to call sinners to repentance; and if they have not this effect, in vain they rely on him for pardon; for it is not every one that may confess to believe in him (but those who, from his example, are led and excited to amendment) that will be made partakers of this his sufficient sacrifice. Again,

3dly. Thirdly, it was impossible that man, considered as mere man, should have made a perfect and fitting sacrifice, such as was consistent with the majesty of God to accept; because, first, he was a sinner himself, and as such had sins of his own to atone for, as well as those of others*. And, secondly, as only man, it was impossible he should perform all righteousness, and so, by consequence, could neither merit the pardon of his own or others transgressions, or appease the wrath of God against them, as our Saviour did. Man alone could not be such an high-priest as became us, to have†; even one who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; because man differed in every respect from these perfections: he was not holy, but sinful; not harmless, but so far from it, that his inward parts are very wickedness; not separate from sinners, but a great one himself; and so far from being higher than the heavens, that he was lower and viler than the earth, even sinful dust and ashes. But Christ,

* Heb. chap. ix. ver. 7.

† Heb. chap. vii. ver. 26.

Christ; and he only, is, or could be such a mediator, who was thus qualified: he was perfect God and perfect man, and as such acted perfectly in both natures: fulfilled to the greatest perfection in the one, what he as perfectly required in the other†: He then is, and ever will be a mediator and intercessor for us: he will plead our need of grace, because by being man, he knows our wants; and will give us victory and strength, because he is well acquainted with our weakness: and as God, he will enlighten our comprehensions, since he knows, that it is not in man to direct his own ways; and will grant us his aid and assistance, because he is thoroughly sensible, how insufficient we are without this help, to act his will. And lastly, he will crown us with glory, and give us a reward, for doing those duties, which he himself enables us to perform. Thus it appears plain, that this sacrifice of Christ was sufficient to put away sin, by being but once offer'd, and is so far more perfect than any other sacrifice whatever, that could have been made to God, for the sins of man, that I may say of it, as David did of Goliath's sword; there is none like it.

The last thing I shall do at present, shall be to offer some considerations to strengthen our faith in, and hope of salvation, through the merits of Christ's perfect sacrifice, and to deter any from presuming on those mercies, while they continue in sin, hoping at the last to have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, when they have not made it their endeavour to acquire any themselves.

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1st.

† See Dr. Beveridge's Private Thoughts.

1st. And first, what an excitement is here to our faith, to consider, that the son of God became the son of man, that we the sons of men might become the sons of God? to think that (now) God the father will accept through him of our imperfect services and best endeavours, for and instead of such a perfect and sinless obedience, as were required under the Jewish dispensation? to think, that now we have an advocate with the father, to be the propitiation for our sins? to the end therefore, that we may be persuaded, this his intercession will be most effectual with God, for our pardon, let us consider, that it is his well-beloved and his only son, for whose sake, God will be intreated to pardon us sinful creatures.

Is Christ the prince of peace come to bring life and immortality to light, to open the gates of heaven to all believers, and to shut out the strength and power, the malice and the envy of the devil from us; so that unless we, as it were, invite him, he cannot prevail against us? and shall we not trust in him? has the eternal son of righteousness assur'd us, that we shall be made partakers of his resurrection; provided we will embrace his revealed will, and faithfully believe in his name? and shall we refuse allegiance to him? nay further, has he not given us his word for it, and even left us a lasting testimony of his love to us, in that means of faith, the holy sacrament, wherein he is continually making himself (as it were) in a retrospective manner, visibly to be crucified, and offer'd up for us, before our faces? and after such a favour, can we be so ungrateful as to turn our backs on this seal of our salvation? does he therein

therein promise to become one with us; and shall we, by entertaining any beloved lust, rob him of the possession of our souls, and ourselves of a kind of spiritual possession, of no less a person, than the son of God? consider this ye that forget God†, that he that spiritually eateth not Christ's flesh, and drinketh his blood, hath no part in him. Think upon the love, which the Saviour of the world bears you, that he giveth you his mystical presence here, to assure you of being eternally pre ent with him hereafter, in the great supper of the lamb.

Lastly, Is he ready to enter into our souls, and shall we by neglecting to wait upon him in his ordinance, bar him thence, and hazard our salvation? rather, let us pray and beseech him, that he would come by force, and disarm the strong man, who has now possession of our hearts, and dwell with us himself for ever.

2dly. Secondly, let the consideration of what God hath already done, and will still do for us, stir us up to love him, and to testify our love by obedience to his commands: and if we thus act, we shall find, that what God is, and what he hath, is our portion. For instance, is he just, wise, kind, powerful, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent? we may by our faith incline him, to exemplify some rays of these attributes for our good; for whom we see his only son has died; and our faith and love may make this death of his our advantage. Has he a spirit? it shall live in us, till we forcibly resist it. Is earth his? it shall be our provision. Hath he angels? they shall guard

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† Psalm l. ver. 22.

† John, chap. vi. ver. 53.

us. Hath he comforts? they shall support us under all our trials, under all our conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Hath he glory? that shall make us happy, for the lord will give grace and glory, to all that live a godly life, and no good thing will he withhold from them*.

And now, I hope (after such encouragement to make us yield a ready obedience to all Christ's laws, and a willing faith in him as our Saviour) I need say but little to affright us from continuing in a sinful course, and therefore shall be but short. And,

1. First, let us consider the pleasures of sin are but transient, but the punishment of it is eternal. If we will not be persuaded by the love; yet, let us by the terrors of the Lord denounced against sin, be prevailed upon, to turn unto him; and let us not be so ungrateful to our redeemer, nor so injurious to our own souls, as to slight his offers, till it be too late to receive benefit from them.

2. Secondly, let us consider the probability of God's leaving such to themselves, to follow their own inclinations, who will not follow Christ as well as they can: and then doubtless they will have their reward in the lake of fire and brimstone, which burneth for ever: for if they would not be moved by the mercies of God, but frustrated all the means of grace, which were offer'd to them: if they set light by the inestimable blessings of the Christian privileges, and care for those lusts, which it cost the son of God so much blood and agony, to rescue them from the power of, to

expiate

* Psalm lxxxiv. ver. 11.

expiate their guilt, and obtain pardon for, they must dye: nay! let those, to whom I speak, be themselves judges, if it will not be just in God, to set light by them, and to despise their cries at the day of judgment.

3. Thirdly, to those, who may have formerly subjected themselves to Christ's easy yoke, and the light burden of his commands, and are laugh'd out of it, or are led away by their own lusts and enticed*: to such, who having once set their hand to the plough, and now draw back, God says, his soul shall have no pleasure in them†; and to these our saviour speaks, when he says, they are not fit for the kingdom of heaven‡; and again, in another place: they who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of them also shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall come to judge the world. And the apostle declares, that to such as these, there remains no remission of sins. It is impossible for those who have been once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they have crucified to themselves the son of God afresh§, and put him to an open shame, having counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and thus done despite unto the spirit of grace||. But then this falling away is to be understood only of a total

* James, chap. i. ver. 14.

† Heb. chap. x. ver. 38.

‡ Luke, chap. ix. ver. 62.

§ Heb. chap. vi. ver. 4, 5, 6.

|| Heb. chap. x. ver. 29.

total apostacy from Christianity; and the tasting of the Holy Ghost is, that influencing spirit, which is in the Heart of every true believer.

I have now gone through what I at first proposed, and have shew'd, first, that Christ hath appeared. I have, secondly, proved the end of his appearance. Thirdly, I have pointed out the way by which he was to put away our sin. And, fourthly, the sufficiency of the means to that end. And surely, that cannot but be a no less welcome than faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners*.

May God give myself, and all my readers, grace, seriously to consider in this our day the things that belong to our peace, before they are hid from our eyes†; and that we, knowing these things, may (by the assistance of God) be always found doing something in obedience to his commands, and in gratitude for his love, who came down from heaven‡, and was (as on this day) born of a virgin for our salvation; that at his second coming, we may appear with him in glory§, and be made partakers of that blessedness, and those mansions, which he is gone before to prepare for us||, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed (as is most due) all possible honours, thanksgivings and praise, now and for evermore. Amen.

Δοξα Θεω.

* 1 epist. Tim. chap. i. ver. 15.

† Luke, chap. xix. ver. 42.

‡ 1 epist. Thess. chap. iv. ver. 16.

§ Acts, chap. i. ver. 11.

|| John, chap. xiv. ver. 2.

Sermon VI.

Persevering in a good life, a proper antidote against envy.

Prov. chap. xxiii. ver. 17, 18.

Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. For surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

THE different distributions of rewards and punishments in this world, as they are no mark of God's peculiar favour or disesteem, so neither do they offer to us any cause to be discontented at our own condition, or envious at that of others.

But tho' this would appear plain to every considerate examiner of the ways of providence; because such an one would see there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked*; that the sun shines on the just as well as on the unjust†, and that God is good even to the unthankful: tho', I say, this would appear plain, to one that takes this view of providence; yet (I know not how it is) the rich, the great, and the prosperous, tho' wicked, are generally the subjects of envy; their wealth

* Eccles. chap. ix. ver. ii.

† Matt. chap. v. ver. 45.

wealth gives a sanction to their condition, and casts such a gloss on all their inapparent uneasinesses, that most men are deceived thereby, and are ready to pronounce them the favourites of heaven; and in consequence of this erroneous conceit, are ambitious of their grandeur and think that they come into no misfortune like other men.† But would they duly weigh these things, and consider the end of providence in them; and at the same time that they look upon their amassed wealth, as a subject worth their emulation, would they also examine them closer, and take a stricter view of their condition, they would soon find them to be set in slippery places, and to be in jeopardy every hour, as St. Paul speaks upon another occasion*.

The wise man, who had experienc'd every passion, the nature of man could imbibe, and had gratify'd them in every particular, pronounces them upon the whole to be but vanity: and as the enjoyments of pleasure, ease and grandeur (which are the effects of riches) are vain; so consequently, the cause producing these effects must be vain also: tho' he had satisfy'd them in as great a degree as was possible, and had acquir'd such riches as never any man before him did, nor any after him ever will acquire, as appears by God's promise to him||, yet he denominates them unsatisfactory, and declares that there was no permanent consolation in them, but much trouble in the possession, and great anxiety from a fear of losing them: and as this anxiety is the

natural

† Psalm lxxiii. ver. 5.

§ Psalm lxxiii. ver. 17.

* 1 epist. Cor. chap. xv. ver. 30.

|| 1 Kings, chap. iii. ver. 12.

natural parent of sin, Solomon's advice in the words of the text is very pertinent and suitable; let not thine heart envy sinners; but continue thou in the fear of the lord all the day long: and he assigns a very cogent reason for it, in the latter part of the verse; for surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off: as if he had said, there will soon be an end of the poor man's suffering, and of the rich man's vanity: and, consequently, the equal shortness of their duration is not only a strong argument to the poor man, for contentment in his own, but also against his envying the other's station.

From which words, I shall take occasion to do these three things,

I. First, endeavour to shew the folly and absurdity of envying another's condition: let not thine heart envy sinners.

II. Secondly, demonstrate the great necessity of continuing in the fear of the Lord all the day long: But continue thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

III. Thirdly, enforce the reasonableness of this duty from these two considerations suggested in the text: namely,

1. That the sinner's revellings will soon be accomplished: for surely there is an end: and,

2. From the assurance we have, that the expectation of the righteous shall not be cut off: let not thine heart envy sinners, but continue thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long: for surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

I. First then I am to shew the great folly and absurdity of envy, which I shall do, by offering some considerations against it. And,

1st. First, Job tells us, envy slayeth the silly one*, and parallel to this, is what Solomon says, a sound heart (by which he means, as I apprehend, a contented one) is the life of the flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bone†. Envy generally proceeds from, and is excited by that uneasiness, which one man feels upon seeing another in a more flourishing way than himself; or in perceiving him furnish'd with more or greater endowments either of wit, prudence, judgment, or such like qualities: which is extremely foolish, as will appear, by the following considerations.

1. First, has God Almighty the supream governor of the world, plac'd our neighbour in a prosperous condition; and at the same time allotted to us but just such a competency as will support life? which (I confess indeed) is often the case; yet to murmur at these circumstances, and to repine at providence, upon this account, is so unbecoming a behaviour and deportment, towards the lord of life and glory; that one would think, no christian could be guilty of it, who really had a reverence for his creator.

2. Secondly the consideration of our own inability to merit the least favour at the hand of God, should make us contented and resign'd, and to say with old Eli, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good‡; for what have any of us that we did not receive? and I believe no one

shall be edified if I will

* Job, chap. v. ver. 2.

† Prov. chap. xiv. ver. 30.

‡ 1 Sam. chap. iii. ver. 18.

§ 1 epist. Cor. chap. iv. ver. 7.

will dare to say, God has not given him more than he has deserv'd: because existence must be previous to merit, and this existence, which gives us the opportunity of being for ever happy is so great a blessing, that the whole life of man is little enough to be spent in the virtues of resignation, thanksgiving, adoration and patience to God's will, in order to be fit for this, or any consequent reward. Shall we then (I say) who in the very worst condition, have received and do enjoy, so much more than we deserve, murmur at God's disposals? shall we who are every moment forfeiting even our present mercies, and justly accumulating to our selves future punishments, pretend to challenge any thing at the hand of God? shall our eye be evil, because his is good||? shall we repine at another's allotment, because we vainly imagine ourselves more deserving? how affronting this to the majesty of heaven? what an ungrateful return is this to him, from whom we receive our life and breath, and who gives us all things richly to enjoy†? thus to question his wisdom, and (as it were) set up our own in competition with it? must he, who is infinitely wise, in disposing of his goodness, be controul'd, or directed by those, who with their highest attainments, have nothing but what they have receiv'd from him, who is the inexhaustible fountain of wisdom and justice? shall such a worm as man, pretend (as it were) to rejudge his justice, and be the God of God*, or at all find fault with the distributions of his good creatures? when upon the whole if left to himself, he really would not,

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|| Matt. chap. xx. ver. 15.

† 1 epist. Tim. chap. vi. ver. 17.

* See Pope's Essay on Man.

(considering another's condition in every light) prefer it to his own) is it not enough that he receives any thing, when every thing is undeserv'd? but must he dictate also what proportion God should give? go to now, and consider this, ye murmurers: is it thus ye requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise†? all whose ways are judgment, for just and right is he. Shall the thing formed, say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus§?

3. Let us consider, thirdly, the rich man's condition a little further, and we shall find it to be one more fit to raise our pity, than our envy; knowing how great a talent riches are, and how hard it is for a rich man to enter into life: look but upon the difficulties attendant on this station, which our Saviour has strongly delineated in those words of his; it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into life||, by which he means it as an arduous task; not that riches, merely as such, are bolts to heaven's gates, for then would the patriarchs Abraham, Lot and Job have been excluded, who were all exceeding rich: no! 'tis ill-gotten, or ill-employ'd wealth, that is the main impediment. If this will not suppress your envy, but you are still ambitious of running such a hazard, yet let me before you give a further loose to this corroding passion, offer to your consideration some further inconveniencies, which are inseparable from it: for instance, does he whom you envy, enjoy plenty? this plenty raises proud thoughts: do his riches give him power? this power tempts him
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† Deut. chap. xxxii. ver. 6 & 4.
‡ Eccl. chap. ix. ver. 20.

|| Matt. chap. xix. ver. 24.

to oppress those below him; whose dependence is perhaps on his bounty, good-nature and generosity. Is he continually surrounded with flatterers? this is only the gilded outside of a pill, most likely to make him think so well of himself, as to forget God his maker, who hath done so great things for him*; or like Pharaoh's magicians lead him to despise that omnipotent power, which in an afflicted state, he might perhaps properly adore†: add to this health of body, and here is another temptation to him, to make him think, that his house shall continue for ever, and his memorial throughout all generations‡: again, the outward appearance he is to make in the world, requires so much of his time, that he has little leisure to think of a better life. This trouble about many things (it is very likely) will make him neglect the one thing needful, the care of his immortal soul§, or the necessity of securing to himself a blessed immortality. These, besides ten thousand more, considerations, which in every particular circumstance of the rich man, is by him particularly to be observed, are so many reasons against envying his condition: and if his riches and honours, his grandeur and appearance, terminate in this fatal issue, how unhappy a man is he? what will the vanities of the world avail him at the hour of death? how tasteless and insipid will they then appear? how unsatisfactory will they prove, towards giving him a moment's ease, at that time, when the dawn of a miserable eternity, and the apprehensions of leaving the world,

* Psalm cvi. ver. 21.

† Exod. chap. viii. ver. 7.

‡ Psalm xlix. ver. 11.

§ Luke, chap. x. ver. 41, 42.

world, with all its pomp and splendour shall seize upon his soul? for riches profit not in the way of wrath||.

4. Fourthly, the weakness of human reason should teach us, that envy is a sin, because had we every condition that we envy, and did the almighty condescend to shew us our folly, by granting our requests; we should like the children of Israel, (when upon their desire God gave them a king, and shew'd them their ignorance in asking) humble our selves under the almighty hand of God, and confess we had sinned.† The children of Israel's desiring a king proceeded from their envying other nations, whom they thought to be better govern'd than themselves*, under Samuel and his sons, as we are told, where it is said, that the elders assembled themselves together at Ramah, and said unto Samuel, Behold! thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But this desire of theirs God reproves tho' he grants their requests, saying unto Samuel, hearken to their voice, for they have not rejected thee but me†. Hence we may learn, 1st. that either in particular persons, or in a whole nation, envying the prosperity of another, and being discontented at our own state, is a rejecting God's dominion over us, and will meet with a suitable reward. 2dly. that tho' God grants the prayer of the envious man, and gives him his desires, yet the very grant implies a punishment, and is no proof, that his desire was well pleasing unto God; as we see in the

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|| Prov. chap. xi. ver. 4.

† 1 Sam. chap. xii. ver. 19.

* 1 Sam. chap. viii. ver. 4, 5, 6.

† Ibid. ver. 7.

sequel of the story now before us: for upon Samuel's reproofing them for their discontent (which proceeded from the envy they bore to other nations) they repent, and all the people said unto Samuel, pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king†. And this does every envious man: he only adds to his former crimes that of envying another's station, and will undoubtedly be brought to confess, he did amiss in asking an alteration; and perhaps too by the very granting his request.

5. Fifthly, let us take another view of the prosperous state of the wicked, (for there are too, too few rich who are not so) and let us see how dangerous a talent the wealthy man is entrusted with: that his riches were a talent, I have before hinted, and I now come to assert and prove it.

As God really gives to every one talents and faculties, such as judgment, reason, knowledge, prudence, and many others, with which the mind of man is endued, so is man responsible for the use or abuse made of all or any one of them. The servant, who having but two talents entrusted with him, in the gospel, and had improved them, and brought other two with him, as an increase, had the same approbation from, and was as courteously received by his master, as he who had received five, and had gained as an improvement of them five more. Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy lord§, was the applause they both

† 1 Sam. chap. xii. ver. 19.

§ Matt. chap. xxv. ver. 21.

both met with; only they were rewarded according to their improvement, as they had both rendered two for one, and doubled their talents: and in consequence of this, the reward of him who had gained five talents, must be more than of him who had gained but two; and yet their reward was equal, and he who had least, had no reason to complain, because he, for gaining two talents, was made ruler over two cities, and he who had gained five was made ruler over five cities. Hence we may learn, that the faculties of our mind, or any other endowments, are but ours upon a loan, and that we are accountable for every one of them. We may, indeed, by our improvement make a large use of them, and so render them subservient to the glory of God here, that they may minister an entrance to us abundantly into the joys of our master's rest*, even the regions of eternal bliss hereafter. And as is with the inward faculties of the mind, so is it likewise with the outward ones of the body, riches, honours, power, greatness, and so on: these are only so much lent us out of the treasures of God's goodness, for the improvement of which we are answerable. But these may be termed blessings (and those our own too) in this respect, that it is in the power of the possessors to make them, by a due improvement, subservient to the honour of God, and, in consequence of that, to the benefit of their own souls†; if they who are rich in this world are not high-minded, nor put their confidence in these uncertain riches: if they say not

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* 2 epist. Pet. c. i. ver. 11.

† 1 epist. Tim. c. vi. ver. 17.

unto gold, thou art, my hope, nor unto the fine gold, thou art my confidence*; but, on the contrary, if they are full of good works, use hospitality, are ready to distribute, and willing to communicate; then they will lay up for themselves, a good foundation against the time to come, and so shall lay hold of eternal life.

6. Sixthly, was the improvement which some few make (tho' I fear but few) of their riches, the spur to the envious man, it would be so far from deserving that opprobrious name of envy, that it might be more justly stil'd an emulation or laudable ambition. But such is the unhappiness of most men, that only the acquiring, and not the improvement of their riches, is the motive upon which they act. It is not the secret charity, or the well-disposed generosity†: it is not the ministering to the necessities of their brethren in distress, nor the extricating poor captives out of prison (by ways which can only be discern'd by him who sees in secret, and approved of by him, who is intimate to the intentions of the heart) that promotes their desire: no! quite the contrary. It is the trump of fame, the blazon'd honours, the gilded equipage, the eclat of courtiers, the soothing of fawning sycophants, and the servile complaisance they see paid to this station, which raises their envy. These are the pleasures they malign, which only seem such to invidious eyes, and are overlook'd, as of no consequence, by the possessors. These things, through the mirror of of the envious, appear such marks of God's goodness,

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* Job, chap. xxxi. ver. 24.

† 1 ep. Tim. chap. vi. ver. 18, 19.

| † Rom, chap. xii. ver. 13.

ness, that they can't account for the merit of, in any but themselves; little considering their transient, fleeting, perishable nature, and how severe a scrutiny they must abide, in regard to their improvement, when attained †; it is the least of their thoughts, that he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and takes cognisance of the use or abuse, they would make thereof, if they had them in possession, and may, if they persist in their desire, punish them, as tho' they had enjoyed and had abus'd them, at that great day when he shall come in his glory, to judge both the quick and dead §. Another consideration against envy, is a certain fickleness in the mind of man, which should teach us first to yield ourselves up to the unerring wisdom of almighty God, who ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, and secondly, should make us examine our own hearts, and then we should find ourselves to be ignorant, foolish, and knowing nothing, not so much as to think or act aright; and much less can we tell, how our tempers might, in such a station, as that we envy, be wrought upon and affected, or what force the untried temptations of it might have upon them, which perhaps are now under a tolerable regulation. Thirdly, we should see, by such examination, how indifferently we employ those talents we have, and if upon taking a survey of our conduct, we find we have not, nor perhaps can perform those duties, expected of us in the state we are at present; this should teach us not to be high minded, but to fear||; that

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† Eccles. chap. v. ver. 8.

§ Matt. chap. xvi. ver. 27.

|| Rom. chap. xi. ver. 20.

we by being rich, might be led into many snares and temptations, and be guilty of greater abuse of more multiply'd trusts and talents. But I will further suppose, that it is not the riches and the pomp, but the intellectual faculties with which our neighbour is endued, that causes envy in us; that this has wit and parts, another œconomy and prudence, a third has a sound judgment, a fourth profound learning, and a fifth a tenacious memory, and a warm imagination: and it must be granted, these are all very amiable qualifications, but yet ought not to excite our envy; for why should we repine at the enjoyments of another, and, as it were, murmur at providence, for not having put us upon a level with them? why should we look at every blessing our neighbour has, as so much out of our way, which really seems to be the thought of every envious man. *Invidus alterius macrescit rebus opimis*; nor should we do this especially, did we but consider, that if we have them not, then will not the use or improvement of them be required: this sort of envy is in a peculiar manner repugnant to good nature, destructive of civil society and friendship, and very derogatory from the honour of God, because while we are espying these perfections in our neighbour, to raise our discontent, we not only act a sin, but omit and pass by as unregarded, the opportunity of improving those endowments and faculties God has placed in our own minds. We neglect that duty, which were we to perform, as we ought, would sufficiently employ our time, and instead of envying, we should have that charity, which is kind, and envieth

not*; because we should certainly find we wanted it, and so endeavour to cultivate it in our selves; we should act more consistently with our beings, and live more innocent lives. And to sum up all this conduct and behaviour, would make us approved of by him, that judgeth right. Thus appears the great sin and folly of envy, how hurtful to our selves, and prejudicial to our neighbours and that we may better avoid it; I come now,

II. To mention some excitements to the performance of that duty mentioned in the text, of continuing in the fear of the Lord all the day long; which I shall do,

1st. By considering what it is; and

2dly. The advantage they enjoy, who exercise themselves therein: And,

1st. First I am to shew what this duty is.

In whatever light we look upon ourselves, we must certainly find, we are but impotent and feeble creatures, incapable of assisting ourselves; that from our cradles to our graves we have not a moment, we can properly and independently call our own; (that is) we are every moment depending upon some superiour being for it, which must immediately be God, himself, who made us out of nothing, or his deputed agents, who are the cause of our continuing from one moment to another in existence; for we are not able to preserve ourselves as independent beings, but every minute of our lives, is to us a fresh monument of mercy, and as it were a new creation: 'tis this Being then on whom we thus depend, to whom only we are subject,

* 1 ep. Cor, chap. xiii. ver. iv.

subject, and whom alone we ought to fear. And fear consider'd in this sense, will naturally lead us (as we love life) to be obedient unto him, and to act consistently with those known laws he has given us: because if he is angry, all our days are gone, and we bring our years to an end, as a tale that is told*.

2dly. This fear consists in an abhorrence of all things, that may offend our maker, and in a conformity of all our actions to his divine will. By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil†. It is also stiled the beginning of wisdom: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:‡ a good understanding have all they that do thereafter. Solomon pronounces it to be the whole of man: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man*†.

3dly. The fear of God may be consider'd, in opposition to an audacious fool-hardiness, and insolent behaviour: this sort of fear is that, which gives birth to our humility, stirs us up to confess our own insufficiency and prompts us to revere God's power and justice. To this the prophet Isaiah exhorts the people, saying, sanctify the Lord, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, in contradiction to their idol worship§. 'Twas this kind of fear which stirr'd up Job, to confess his nothingness, and pray unto God, that the greatness of his majesty might not be too powerful, saying in the preface to his exalted discourse of God's omnipotency: only two things do not unto me, then will I not hide myself from thee ||: withdraw thine hand far from me, and

* Psalm xc. ver. 9.

† Prov. chap. xvi. ver. 6.

‡ Psalm cxi. ver. 10.

*† Eccles. chap. x. ver. 13.

§ Isa. chap. viii. ver. 13.

|| Job, chap. xiii. ver. 20, 21.

and let not thy dread make me afraid. This fear of God's omnipotency and power, our Saviour emphatically recommends to our practice, in that memorable passage, where he says, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do*; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him: in this sense also, God himself seems to speak of it, by the prophet Malachi, as a duty due to him†, in that relation wherein he stands to us, as our father and our master, or one to whom our duty and obedience are due; in consequence of that absolute power he has over us: a son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if I then be a father, where is mine honour; and I be a master, where is my fear? again, another sort of fear, is a constant persevering, in a religious course of life, to the latest period of our frail existence: and this seems to be that kind of fear, which is immediately hinted at in the text, as a motive against the sin of envy: But continue thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. And an excellent means undoubtedly it is to this purpose: for it is hardly possible for that soul, which is filled with a consciousness of duty, and a fear of offending him on whom he depends; it is scarce possible, I say, for such an one to give a loose to anxious doubts about his fortune, or to cherish a repining discontent at the prosperity of another; because he knows, it is the Lord, who is the governor of all things‡; who putteth down one, and

* Luke, chap. xii. ver. 4, 5.

† Mal, chap. i. ver. 6.

‡ Psalm lxxv. ver. 8.

and setteth up another. And of this general and constant fear, we are not without examples in holy writ, for our imitation: for this is the commendation of Obadiah, that he was one that feared the Lord greatly*: this is the kind of fear, which Cornelius is signaliz'd by, that he was a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house†; who gave much alms to the people, and prayed unto God always. This also is the characteristic of holy Job, given by God himself, to Satan; as a distinguishing mark, how he might know him‡; insomuch that there was none like him on the earth, a perfect and an upright man; one that feared God and eschewed evil: here the fear of God is the chief signal of a perfect man: and, in this sense, or rather in contradiction thereto, Amalek the son of Esau, is said to be one, who feared not God§; that is, he was wicked, and had not a due sense of, or reverence for God, neither walked he in his ways: of him Balaam prophesies, that he was the first of nations, that warr'd against Israel, but his latter end should be to perish for ever||. Of this fear Pharaoh also was void, insomuch that he is said not to know God*†. And that all these several kinds of fear, when properly attended to, must give great satisfaction to the mind of man, may justly be gather'd from the uneasiness which they who live as without God in the world, feel upon the conviction of wrong actions: and as this is a natural consequence; I shall pass over any further discussion hereupon, and under my

III. Third

* 1 Kings, chap. xviii. ver. 3.

† Acts, chap. x. ver. 2.

‡ Job, chap. iii. ver. 2.

§ Deut. chap. xxv. ver. 18.

|| Numb. chap. xxiv. ver. 20.

*† Exod. chap. v. ver. 2.

III. Third general head, shew the reasonableness of this fear, which I purposed to do these two ways; first, by considering the shortness of the sinner's revelling, For verily there is an end. And, secondly, by examining the motives to it. And herein I shall shew the advantage they enjoy, who exercise themselves in this fear of the Lord. And,

1st. First, I begin with the shortness of the sinner's revelling. Since it is certain we were not born to continue for ever upon earth, and equally so that we are immortal, and that our better part, the soul, must be miserable or happy for ever, it most certainly concerns us, therefore, so to fear God, as to keep from offending him, lest he should come at a time when we look not for him, and at an hour when we are not aware, and suffer us to be taken away when there is none to help*. But though we may be taken away long before the Psalmist's period of threescore years and ten be spun out†, yet as we see some live to fourscore years, or even a hundred, we will allow the sinner the longest period, and fullest extent of life, to take his swing of pleasure in; and when we have done this, we shall even then find his age but as a winter's day, or as a drop of water to the sea, compared with that unmeasurable eternity he is to launch into, so soon as the separation of his soul and body is once made: and that this is true, there is scarce a page in the Bible, which will not convince him both of his short stay here, and his living eternally after his departure hence: but
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* Matth. chap. xxiv. ver. 50.

† Psalm xc. ver. 10.

supposing him even so unfortunate, that he has never once turned over those sacred Pages, that he has never endeavoured to become acquainted with the conditions they offer, yet let common experience have some weight with him; let the desire of happiness (innate in him, if any desires are so) testify to him a notion of an hereafter; and this notion the dictates of reason will afford him, if he will but listen to them. The very heathens, who lived only by that light, had and still have some doubts or misgivings of an hereafter, which is evident from the transports they felt upon the reflection on a well-spent life. Tully was, as it were, certain of it, and speaks accordingly in his discourse of old age, ‘ O præclarum diem! cum ad illud divinum animarum concilium proficiscar; & ex hac turba, & colluvione discedam*. O happy day, (says he) when I shall be admitted into that divine assembly of souls; and when I shall step out of this crowd, this scene of filth and impurity.’ To him, who had only the view of seeing his old companions again, Heaven seem’d to give even a kind of Christian transport; and it was this hope arm’d him against the fears of death, and made him rejoice at his departing hence, having, as St. Paul expresses it, a longing to be released. He was (with him) satisfied, that to the best light he had, he had perform’d his duty, and has as full an assurance as meer reason could afford, that his soul should exist in a better state: his hopes were, that he should in this state, revisit his old companions; those intimate friends, in

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* Tull. de Senectut.

whose society, whilst he was alive, he took so much delight: and this made him so chearfully part with them at the hour of death: and shall one who had only this consciousness of having acted rationally, to lay a stress upon; shall he exceed in faith, one who has, or might have the sure and certain hopes of God's word and promises to depend upon, if he would embrace it, and live according to its precepts? shall the hope of enjoying a small circle of acquaintance, raise in a heathen such transports, as were of force sufficient to exhilarate and cheer him in a dying hour: and shall not the being an associate with angels, and the living for ever in the company of just man made perfect, raise our souls to a more exalted and elevated pitch of holy rapture; especially when we consider, it is not only them we shall enjoy, but that we shall see Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, and that we shall be entertain'd also with the beatific vision, and the never fading joys of heaven itself. These are considerations enough to prove, that we are not made to continue for ever upon earth, and since the life of man is thus short†; since man is such a thing of nought, that his time passeth away like a shadow; if, tho' he is here to day, feasting and making merry, he may be gone to-morrow, and flourishing like a green bay-tree, he may be cut down like the grass*; if while he is heaping up to himself worldly treasure, and laying up goods in store for many years‡, there is a possibility of his being called off from them by a sudden death;

† Psalm cxliv. ver. 4.

• Psalm xxxvii. ver. 36.

‡ Luke, chap. xii. ver. 19, 20.

death; this certainly shews the reasonableness of of fearing God above all things, and to continue in that fear all the days of our appointed time, till our change comes. How foolish is it for any one to run the hazard of acting otherwise, and as it were to throw a main for his soul||.

Is there not cause enough to fear God, in whose hand are the issues of life and death, not only temporal, but eternal too? can he for ever make us miserable? and shall we contemn his power, and as it were deny his prerogative over us, by being disobedient to his word?

2dly. Are we to live for ever, and is it an indifferent thing to us, whether it be in an eternity of happiness or misery? does the sinner boast in punctilio's of honour? and is he so ambitious of fame, as even to hazard his life for every trifling affront, and is it nothing to him to be set at nought by the God of heaven? and that this will be the reward of those, who do not fear God, I may appeal to their own consciences, to attest for me.

3dly. This fear, Thirdly, seems reasonable, as I am persuaded, their spirits sometimes flagg, (for nature is not enexhaustible) and the delights of sense at such times have less relish or pleasure in them, than they have at others; and yet during these intervals their souls do not lye dormant: for they are active and aspiring principles, and will on some occasions (even against their will) soar after something adequate to their natures, and commensurate with their duration beyond the grave after something more than life's short

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period can give; and when they are thus lifted up, to a height of reflection, they must see the danger they are in, in case they should be mistaken. It is in vain to think always to lull their consciences asleep, for if they have any rays of divinity in them (as these misgivings seem to impart) they will be led to a sort of wishing to be happy hereafter. And this consideration join'd to the force of reason and common sense, with the reflection of having acted disagreeably to the whole will of God, must fill their minds with doubts, and a certain anxious disquietude at the amazing uncertainty of their future change: they will sometimes be led to consider the reasonableness of fearing a power above them, and from this persuasion, to form some such soliloquy as this.

“ If there is a God, (and that there is) not only my being, but the evidence of my exterior senses, and the whole frame of nature are an argument, then it is this God, by whom I was created; and it seems consistent with my reason to think; that if he made creatures, and endued them with reason, he should expect some homage from them; and if there is such homage due, it must consist in the performance of certain duties, which are enforced by some laws, whereby the reasonable part of the creation (of whom I am one) are to be govern'd, and in consequence hereof as a member of the whole community, I must be subject to them as well as the rest. Now I am sensible that all my life long I have lived as without God in the world, that I have never thought of paying duty to any thing but my own will: and

“ and if there are such laws, I am certain I have
 “ given no heed to them; neither has it been
 “ my endeavour, even so much as to enquire
 “ after them: I have indeed heard of such things
 “ as laws established (by more than human au-
 “ thority; but paying a regard to them has taken
 “ up no part of my time. I looked upon them,
 “ (or rather pass’d them over) as a sort of priest-
 “ craft, and that it seemed inconsistent to sup-
 “ pose such an one as I was to be controuled
 “ by every person who had an ecclesiastical pre-
 “ tension for so doing.

“ But now, I know not why, I have a
 “ mind to make trial of them: there may
 “ be something reasonable in them; and
 “ they may assert things, I formerly had no
 “ notions of, or thoughts about: they may con-
 “ tain both promises and threatnings, upon the
 “ performance or non-performance of some
 “ laws, impos’d by this great being, whose right
 “ it is.

“ The consideration of this therefore makes
 “ me resolved to try the experiment, and to
 “ search into this book of laws; for if they are
 “ really of such force, as I am told they are, I am
 “ sure I may be punished or rewarded accord-
 “ ing to the tenour of my past deportment.
 “ But before I proceed to the perusal or examen,
 “ I will consider how the contents will affect
 “ me; for should I find, the course of life I
 “ have led, agreeable to these laws, and that
 “ the rewards promis’d are to be made good,
 “ to such as me. who have enjoy’d and gra-
 “ tified those desires which unguided nature
 “ prompted

“ prompted me to; doubtless, I shall be doubt-
 “ ly rejoiced to find, I have lived so long at
 “ ease and pleasure, and that I am to be re-
 “ warded for it, and to enjoy also another
 “ life after this for ever, of tranquility and
 “ peace beyond the grave.

“ But on the other hand, should I find it
 “ otherwise, and that the life I have led, and
 “ the steps I have taken, have been sinful
 “ (which perhaps I may) then how sadly shall
 “ I be afflicted, to find, that these my plea-
 “ sures have been, and are to be but short,
 “ and that in consequence of my actions hav-
 “ ing been contrary to these laws, their reward
 “ will prove to be (as I have been told) a con-
 “ suming fire, or dreadful apprehension of an
 “ eternity of misery; and that all I have done
 “ amiss, must be repented of, with true con-
 “ trition, as it cannot be undone. One of
 “ these two, I am certain, must be true, be-
 “ cause in this consideration are contained two
 “ propositions, diametrically repugnant to each
 “ other, both of which, it is impossible,
 “ should be false, by the scale of reason.
 “ There is a God, or no God, promises and re-
 “ wards, threatnings and punishments, or no
 “ punishments and threatnings, no rewards and
 “ promises: in order then that these terrors may
 “ not seize me too violently, but that I may bear
 “ up, in case I am disappointed, I am determin’d
 “ to look on the best side first, and that which
 “ will raise my hopes, in case I should find the
 “ punishments threatned may admit of any mi-
 “ tigation, or any method of returning, so as to
 “ avert

“ avert them. But be the event what it will,
 “ I am resolved to try, and hereafter to live ac-
 “ cording to these (to me) new laws; that as I
 “ have hitherto indulged my passions, and have
 “ never been rationally satisfied, I may prove,
 “ whether there be any lasting and solid ease,
 “ or any peace of mind in a contrary course.”

These considerations must (I am certain) some time or other seize the sinner's soul; and the very nature of it proves the reasonableness of continuing in the fear of the Lord all our days, that we may avoid so strict a scrutiny, such deep and pungent sorrow, as must seize the sinner, being once persuaded of the error of his ways: and happy will it be if this supposed repentance should take place, and the sinner should by such reflections, be led to amendment and newness of life; to such a repentance as is not to be repented of: for in vain will his excesses, if he is rich, or his anxious repinings at providence in a low condition, be at the day of judgment and visitation, when nothing, perhaps, will appear to him but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, from the hand of God, to consume him, who has been the adversary of his word, and a despiser of his laws. God's mercy may then appear tired out, and the pain of his dying body may add fuel to the flame of his disturbed mind; when the direful expectations of an avenging God, ready to destroy him, haunt his soul, to reflect on the purity of his nature, in whose sight the very angels are not clean, will then only serve to add to his perplexity and doubt, if he persists in this obstinate and contumacious

malicious course of life; he may depend upon it, he will most feelingly prove, that God is a jealous God, who will not have his honour so vilely treated. He will then find, that verily there is an end: and to him a woeful end indeed.

2dly. I come now to examine the more comfortable motives to induce us to continue in the fear of the Lord all the day long, suggested to us in the latter part of the text; for thy desire shall not be cut off: that is, the desire of the righteous, to whom only it is relative.

For, 1st. Such is the goodness of Almighty God; such the abundance of his love, that he is not only graciously pleased to accept, but bountiful also in rewarding our imperfect services: he does not upbraid us for our unworthy demerits, but accepts the least (if sincere) instance of our duty; insomuch, that the giving even a cup of cold water to any of his poor members, is not overlooked by him; but those are assured of a reward who do so trivial a service out of zeal, and a desire of obeying his commands: and if God is pleased to make his goodness apparent in these little things, what reason have we to doubt that they who have endeavoured through the whole course of their lives to abide in his fear, should not meet with a proportionate reward?

2. For a further illustration of these words of Solomon, that the desire of the righteous shall not be cut off, I would consider this continuance in its most extensive sense, as it imports the subjecting all our affections and desires to his holy will, and becoming obedient to that will of his, which he has been pleased to reveal. And as

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to become thus perfect, and thus to live in the fear of God, requires our putting up with all the affronts and contumelies we may meet with, and our greatest care and vigilance, circumspection and resolution, so to the conquering these difficulties is that blessing assigned by our Saviour, when he says, Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you for righteousness sake: rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven*.

As our Saviour exhibits many virtues, at the beginning of his divine sermon upon the mount: (blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth: blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled: blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy: blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God: blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be call'd the children of God †) to which he has annex'd as many respective blessings; so this constant perseverance, in the fear of God, will also, undoubtedly, be crown'd with a suitable reward: for, if these virtues, severally consider'd, are entitled to a reward, by promise through Jesus Christ, how much more shall they be rewarded, when they meet together jointly in one soul, as they most certainly do in theirs, who endeavour to conform their thoughts, words and actions to the will of God, and the pattern of Christ our Saviour, and who study to render, whatever they do, somewhat subservient to the honour of God: striving continually to bring

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* Matt. chap. v. ver. 11, 12.

† Ibid. ver. 4 to 9.

into subjection the law of their members to the law of God** : to exercise these virtues in a state of subjection, to endure sufferings, and patiently to submit to God's will, in all the distributions of his providence: these are things, which God has declared he delighteth in: for, thus saith the high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place: with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*: and again, thus saith the Lord: the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot-stool†: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? for all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word: and this is not all, for we have the blessings of this, as well as the other world; to the meek is promis'd the inheritance of the earth‡; to the merciful, that they shall obtain mercy§; and these are the express conditions mention'd by our Saviour in those words I have just now cited: and he is faithful, who hath promis'd, and will undoubtedly not be wanting on his part, if we do but perform ours, because he is not man that he should lye, nor the son of man that he should repent||: he is yea and amen, and with him is no variableness or shadow of turning.*† His covenant is with them that fear

** Rom. chap. vi. ver. 13.

* Isa. chap. lvii. ver. 15.

† Isa. chap. lxvi. ver. 1, 2.

‡ Matt. chap. v. ver. 5.

§ Matt. chap. v. ver. 7.

|| Numb. chap. xxiii. ver. 19.

*† Jam. chap. i. ver. 17.

him, throughout all generations, his covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips||. The psalmist tells us, that they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy*, and that whoso goes on his way weeping, shall doubtless come again, and bring his sheaves with him†; that is, as our Saviour speaks, such an one, who by much tribulation striveth, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven‡.

3. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, affords us another instance, that the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever§, but that tho' the righteous is afflicted here, yet he shall be happy for ever: for in this history, we see a favourite of God persecuted and afflicted, tormented with pain, starved with hunger, pinch'd with cold, and immers'd in the lowest degree of poverty, with all it's aggravating circumstances; of whom it might be said, that God had vex'd him with all his storms; one whom poverty pressed so hard, as to make him earnestly to sue, even for the crumbs which falls from the rich man's table, and yet was refus'd by him; which added weight to his sorrow, and anguish to the pains he felt in his diseased body, from those sores, which had only the tongues of dogs to mollify them. But under these sufferings, he shew'd an humble spirit, and like Job kept fast his integrity, so long as he lived**. His humility appeared from the words of his petition, desiring only that food, which would have been given to

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|| Psalm lxxxix. ver. 34.

* Psalm cxxvi. ver. 5.

† Ibid. ver. 6.

‡ Luke, chap. xiii. ver. 24.

§ Psalm ix. ver. 18.

** Job, chap. xxvii. ver. 5.

the dogs, yet even here he met with a repulse, and had no friend but God, who still upheld him with his hand, and by his strengthening power, gave him an inward assurance that his desire should not be cut off: and so it prov'd, for no sooner was his soul releas'd from its clayey tabernacle, but it was safely lodg'd in Abraham's bosom; where (as we may well suppose) he saw a contrary fate attend his hard-hearted adversary: for in him, the words of David were verified; he was cut down as the grass, and wither'd like the green herb, and the place of his abode knew him no more†; whilst the righteous, tho' poor, Lazarus's patience, forbearance, and contented resignation, ministr'd to him an inheritance into the mansions of eternal bliss: and so shall it be with every one, who liveth constantly in the fear of the Lord; for God is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour of love§; and tho' he often leads us through much tribulation to our Father's house, and often tries us in the fire of affliction, yet these afflictions generally prove blessings in the end, and we may be assur'd are intended as the affectionate pledges of our heavenly Father's love, for God never leaves his servants entirely destitute of his assistance: of which David assures us, saying, I have been young, and now am old: and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread||. But admitting this to be the case, and that the righteous are suffer'd (as examples to others) to sink into the lowest state; yet we see by the poor man in the gospel,

† Psalm xxxvii. ver. 2.
 Psalm ciii. ver. 16.

§ Heb. chap. vi. ver. 10.
 || Psalm xxxvii. ver. 25.

gospel, that his virtues may meet with a just recompence of reward: and then, happy will it be for us, if any of the light afflictions of this world, which are but momentary,* procure for us an inheritance, incorruptible and full of glory, eternal in the Heavens†: for whilst the rich and worldly minded only aim at the applause of men, in all their actions, and not at that honour, which cometh from God only: the poor man on the contrary, is quite regardless of the praise of men, and strives only to approve himself to him who judgeth righteously. 'Tis not the scoffs of the wicked, nor their high station, can move him to let go his integrity, or laugh him out of countenance: for he, tho' he enjoys not these riches, is better acquainted with their real worth, than one whose thoughts and desires are engross'd by them: he considers them as childrens toys, which are soon broke, and himself as a candidate for a more enduring substance‡; namely for those joys, which are at God's right hand, and those pleasures which last for evermore§.

But, I fear, I may say here with the prophet, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord so far revealed||, as that neither the splendour of any thing that is great, nor the conceit of any thing that is good in them, can move them from their duty? who is he? let him come forth, that we may know him, what is his name**, or what is his son's name, that hath courage and constancy enough, to outbrave the being

* 2 ep. Cor. ch. iv. ver. 17.

† 1 ep. Pet. ch. i. ver. 4.

‡ Heb. ch. x. ver. 34.

§ Psalm xvi. ver. 11.

|| Isa. ch. liii. ver. 1.

** Prov. chap. xxx. ver. 4.

being derided and persecuted for righteousness sake? who, that with Moses would rather chuse to suffer afflictions, and be one of God's people, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season §? we are apt to distrust God's care of us, and to think he has cast us off, when we see the wicked flourish, and look upon them, not as we ought, with pity and commiseration, but with envy and repining, having no respect to the recompence of reward ||, which the righteous God will give unto all them that fear and obey him. There is something in these earthly toys, which charm the sensual mind; their being present takes mightily with us (as play-things with young children) and we are apt to catch at the alluring baits of pleasures, wealth and honours, but whilst we look on these temporal things, we lose sight of our inheritance and portion in that bliss which is eternal. To this infatuation, the rational soul is not subject, which consciousness of their nothingness, will use them aright, and look on them as a means only to promote a further end; and from such a contemplation will be led to use them as subservient to such an end: and whatever is more than necessary, he will, with Solomon, pronounce to be vanity and vexation of spirit, being fully persuaded, it is another sort of bliss to which that character is given; Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him*.

Lastly,

§ Heb. ch. xi. ver. 25.

|| Ibid. ver. 26.

* 1 epist. Cor. chap. ii. ver. 9.

Lastly, another assurance we have that the desire of the righteous shall not be cut off, is what God hath told us by his prophet Samuel; Him that honoureth me, I will honour; and he who despises me shall be lightly esteemed †. And can we want a fuller testimony of any thing than this? Have we not the word of God for it, and can we therefore in the least doubt it? Was not the whole drift of our Saviour's coming in the flesh, and suffering all the bitter agonies which he endured, to assure us, that he was the way, the truth, and the light ‡? Hath he not told us, that he is gone to prepare a place for us §, and that they who by patient continuing in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, shall be given the reward of eternal life ||? And again, that whoso perseveres to the end, the same shall be saved *? Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God ††; not in the least doubting, but that he who gave us desires, capable of no satisfaction, short of eternal bliss, will reward us with it, when he cometh in his kingdom of glory, to render to every one according to his works ††.

† 1 Sam. chap. ii. ver. 30.

‡ John, ch. xiv. ver. 6.

§ John, ch. xiv. ver. 2.

|| Rom. ch. ii. ver. 7.

* Matt. ch. x. ver. 22.

†† 2 ep. Cor. ch. vii. ver. 1.

‡‡ Rom. ch. ii. ver. 6.

Sermon VII

God's justice in his dealings vindicated
and the folly of Predestination shown.

I have no pleasure in the death of him that
 turneth from his wickedness: wherefore turn your
 back, and live ye.
 For I desire no pleasure in the death of him that
 turneth from his wickedness: wherefore turn your
 back, and live ye.
 For I desire no pleasure in the death of him that
 turneth from his wickedness: wherefore turn your
 back, and live ye.

THESE words are the conclusion of God's
exposition with his people, by his pro-
phet Ezekiel, wherein he vindicates his
own justice from their censures: for having re-
prov'd them for their unright application of the
four grapes*, to prove that God punish'd the
iniquity of the fathers upon the children; he
vindicates himself by telling them, in what man-
ner he deals with the transgressors, & that they should
that if they did such and such things they should
die: but if (on the contrary) they would turn
from the error of their ways, and did that which was
lawful and right, they should save their souls
alive: that in such case all their transgressions

Sermon VII.

God's justice in his dealings vindicated,
and the folly of Predestination shewn.

Ezek. chap. xviii. ver. 29, 32.

Yet saith the house of Israel, the way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

THESE words are the conclusion of God's expostulation with his people, by his prophet Ezekiel, wherein he vindicates his own justice from their censures: for having reprov'd them for their unjust application of the four grapes*; to prove that God punish'd the iniquity of the fathers upon the children; he vindicates himself by telling them, in what manner he deals with the sons of men; assuring them, that if they did such and such things they should die, but if (on the contrary) they turn'd from the error of their ways, and did that which was lawful and right, they should save their souls alive: that in such case all their transgressions,

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whereby they had sinned, should not be mentioned against them; but that in the righteousness, which they had done, in that should they live; and then calls upon them, and bids them be themselves the judges of his proceedings with them, in the words of the text: *yet saith the house of Israel, the way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?*† for he declares to them, that every one shall die for his own iniquity; and that every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge; and in the 20th verse of the chapter before us, he says, the soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son, but the soul that sinneth, that shall die, assuring them withal, that he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dies. The words being thus stated, as they seem to be a confutation of that most uncomfortable, as well as profane doctrine of Predestination; I shall endeavour to vindicate the honour of God, from the unjust censures of those, who are maintainers and abettors of it, and consider them in the following manner.

I. First, with regard to the doctrine itself, and meaning of the word.

II. Secondly, as to its contrariety to the nature of man, as a free agent.

III. Thirdly, with respect to the nature of God. And herein, I shall endeavour rightly to explain the several texts of scripture, pleaded in favour of this doctrine.

IV. Fourthly,

† Jer. chap. ~~xxi~~ ver. 30.

IV. Fourthly, shall give some counsel and advice to two sorts of persons, who are extremely prejudiced by this heretical persuasion.—The first are those, whom the belief thereof eggs on or encourages in a sinful course, and consequently the most unhappy. The second are those, who through fear of its possibility are drove to despair of God's eternal mercies. Which done, I shall

V. Fifthly, conclude with a suitable application of the whole.

L. First, then, I am to consider it, with respect to the doctrine, and meaning of the word.

Predestination signifies an absolute fore-ordination, or decree of some superior being acting upon another, in an inferior state of existence, and determining its futurity; which inferior being is hereby understood to be so wrought upon, as that it neither has, or can have a power of acting freely, as of itself, or of exerting any of its faculties: that under this influence it has no power to do, or let alone doing any thing, whether in the real nature of the thing itself it be good or bad, any further than it receives such a power of acting from this superior and absolute being's having fore-ordained this subordinate creature so to act; but that it stands, in respect of him, as a meer machine or piece of clock-work, and in consequence hereof can do no manner of good, or contract any ill, by doing or letting alone any thing which it is thus inevitably forced and compelled to do, from the will of this prime

cause, and determiner of all its motions; whereby all merit and demerit are rendered void, and reason, the great characteristic of man's nature, is made unnecessary; which puts me upon the search to find out two such beings, in one of which this superior and absolute determining power dwells; and the other, on whom it acts with such an absolute sway. And for my part, I can find none but the inanimate part of the creation: for though the beasts seem to have some tendency this way, and are greatly under the influence of instinct, which in this their irrational and unconscious existence, guides, governs, and directs them to the necessaries and accommodations of life, yet even they do not seem absolutely without some degree of self-agency. But we are told by the Fatalists, that God, the author and source of all existence, is one; and man, whom he created in his own likeness, is the other of these beings, so reciprocally acting and acted upon: to bring about which, they pretend to call man an actuated machine, and deny him to have any self-agency at all. But that this cannot be, I come,

H. Secondly, to prove, by examining the doctrine, in regard to man's nature, as a free agent, which I insist he is; that is, one, who (tho' subject to some laws, yet) has it in his own free power to act agreeably or disagreeably to the laws so prescribed to him by his creator, which if he had not, he undoubtedly could not have been liable to the curse of original sin. And notwithstanding God Almighty most certainly had it in his power to have sent him into the world, under

under what mode or form of existence he pleas'd; yet when he had pass'd his almighty fiat, and had breath'd into him a living soul, and had made him in his own likeness; then, we may see by Moses's account of the creation, that he gave him a liberty of action, and laid no other restrictions on him, than by offering to him, certain covenants and conditions of rewards and punishments, on his compliance or non-compliance with the laws, so prescrib'd to him. Now, had man been like the inanimate part of the creation, which are always tending to their original dependencies, constantly fulfilling their gravitative or attractive laws, or had he been like the brutal part of the creation, always under the impulse of instinct, and by this had had his powers much limited: had he been, I say, acted upon determinately, and not left to a freedom of will; then what occasion had there been for guarding the tree of life in the garden of Eden? to what purpose would the Devil's insinuations have been to our first mother, or her's to Adam; if, as they were originally created perfect, (which they were; or God, who is perfect, could not be their maker, because he could not make any thing, but what he must approve, and could not approve any thing, but what was perfect) they had been oblig'd by the laws of their creation, to have so remain'd? for then, temptation could not have prevail'd against them, any more than rhetoric can move a statue, or a fine edifice be rais'd by preaching to the materials, which are to compose its structure. But God having given them (as he certainly did) a freedom of action, which they had

had abus'd by disobeying his commands; tho' he did not divest them of their liberty, yet we see, to prevent their living in an endless course of wickedness, he sent an Angel to guard the tree of life. Again, further, had man been thus determin'd, and had he had no freedom of action left him; I think it must be granted, that (according to our comprehension of things) it would have been inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, and with those notions we are allow'd to conceive of him, to punish man, as an aggressor, for doing those things, whether eating the forbidden fruit, or any thing to be suppos'd besides, which he (being determinately necessitated to) could not avoid: but in such case, what would become of the wisdom of our great creator, and his moral government of the world? whilst on the contrary, the doctrine of free-will in man, is consistent with all the attributes of the divine Being, and all the faculties and endowments of the rational man. But as there are some texts of scripture, which seem to countenance, and are brought in plea for this doctrine, I shall consider it, as I propos'd,

III. Thirdly, with respect to the nature of God, and explain somewhat more fully what I have just hinted above, of it's contrariety to the justice and mercy of our all-perfect Creator, by examining those texts of scripture, which (having been as I apprehend, perverted or misapplied) seem to favour the abettors of this doctrine. And

1st. First,

First, they urge the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the nineteenth chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, and indeed all that chapter, to express God's absolute power over us, and say, that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*, and therefore it is with us, (say they) as it was with Pharoah under the old law, of whom we are told, that God raised him up in very deed for this cause to shew his power in him, and that he would harden that monarch's heart: whence they infer, that they neither have, nor can have it in their power to resist his will, or to act self-sufficiently. Why then (say they) does he yet find fault, since no one has, nor (on this supposition) can resist his will? and so on. In answer hereto, let it be considered,

First, That God governs the world according to the most exact rules of wisdom; that he has regard to the general good of his creatures in all he does, and acts not by partial and capricious laws; but whilst he determines the laws of matter, in a great measure leaves the rational world to its own resolves: besides, we fatally experience the curse of Adam, which did not only extend to man and his generation, but through him, and on his account to the whole earth, "Curst is the ground for thy sake: thorns and thistles shall it bring forth*." And can it possibly be supposed, that when God had created all things, and approv'd of their different modes of existence by his unerring wisdom; can it be suppos'd, that

† Rom. ch. ix. ver. 17, compar'd with Exod. ch. ix. ver. 16,

* Gen. ch. iii. ver. 17, 18.

that he should suffer conflagrations, earthquakes, deluges, &c. to weaken the whole frame of nature, and declare it to be as a consequent punishment of man's transgression, and at the same time know that man really had it not in his power to avoid sinning, or acting contrary to his nature: had it been so, the Israelites might have cried out, the ways of the Lord are not equal. But this is a thought, which must involve in it the highest imperfection in God, and yet what this doctrine must imply; a thought that argues also an imperfection in the original formation of things, which God declar'd to be all very good, and is consequently giving him the lie. But let it be consider'd,

2. Secondly, that, the subject matter of this chapter was to shew, that all the Jews were not Abraham's seed according to promise, and that it was spoke in a rational light, and signified the calling of the Gentiles, and rejection of the Jews; which two nations are typified by Esau and Jacob, by Isaac and Ishmael. But to return, in regard to Pharaoh, we must consider his character, the time when, and the reason why this was done. His character, we are told, was, that he had been a tyrant from the commencement of his reign*. The time was, when God sent visibly his prophet to convert him to obedience; but he cries out disdainfully, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, or let Israel go†? I know not the Lord neither will I let Israel go: but instead thereof, he increased their work, doubled their tasks, and impos'd a heavier yoke

* Exod. ch. i. ver. 8.

† Ibid. ch. v. ver. 2.

yoke upon them. The reason why it was done, was, that God might bring his chosen people from among the idolatrous nations, and that too by a mighty power, and an outstretched arm. Now, where was the injustice of God, after such high provocations of his majesty, in suffering his heart to be hardened, by withdrawing his grace from him, who had deserved thus ill at his hands, by such bold blasphemies, in bidding defiance to his tremendous power, whereby he could immediately have dashed him out of being? Was it injustice in God to afflict him with temporal punishments, by the plagues he sent, that he might make through him his power to be known; or to suffer that heart to be hardened, on which no miracles would take effect, so far as to make him own God's supremacy, or yield obedience to his commands? If the turning a vegetable rod into a living serpent, or altering the nature of a fluid element, and turning it into blood; if the company of the most loathsome animals would not prevail upon him, which were removed, whenever once he seem'd to relent, what would? If swarms of frogs and lice, locusts, and a destructive murrain on his cattle, the sure presage of an ensuing famine, painful boils upon his own body, and upon the bodies of all his subjects, would not move him to obedience, who can wonder at his sentence? If terrifying hailstones, tremendous darkness, a darkness even to be felt, nay, and the slaying all the first-born throughout his kingdom, would not avail, who can charge the Almighty as if he had dealt unjustly with him, who long before these convictive arguments

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were made use of, was so vile, as to command the murder of all the Egyptian children *, thro' a jealousy that they might one time or other become too potent by their numbers. I repeat it again, that I can see no injustice in God's proceeding with Pharaoh, in these temporal punishments, that he might hereby in him make his power to be known; especially if we further consider,

3. Thirdly, the general view of his providence herein, which was to bring about the deliverance of his chosen from that tyrannical bondage with which he had enslav'd them: and God being willing to effectuate this, suffer'd Pharaoh thus to fill up the measure of his iniquity, and with much patience endured him, who had long since been a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction*: But then

2dly. They object, that it was unjust in God to take away his life: to this I answer negatively: for in this respect, God has an absolute power over us; and we are in his hands, as the clay in the hands of the potter, and he who at first gave us our being, and a free use of all our rational faculties, after having allow'd us as much time of probation, as is consistent with his infinite wisdom and justice, and our own natures, may surely take away our lives, as well as Pharaoh's, if he sees it would be to no purpose, to keep us any longer in being: for had not Pharaoh obstinately followed the Hebrews, he would not have been overwhelm'd in the red sea, with all his army. Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Again, as we soon after our creation abus'd

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* Exod. ch. i. ver. 22.

† Rom. ch. ix. ver. 22.

our freedom, and incurred death, by disobedience against those laws, which we might have obeyed, so God from the beginning (if I may so speak) of our sinning existence, debarr'd us (as he justly might) from living for ever upon earth. Hence, what is urged in respect of Pharaoh, that God took away his life, is weak and trifling, since it was only to prevent his adding sin to sin, and iniquity to iniquity, and cutting his thread of life a little sooner, than perhaps he would have done, had he not been so atrocious a rebel. And as he rais'd him up, which is not to be understood, only of his giving him life, but also to the dignity of a throne, or (as the marginal reading has it) made him to stand, to make his power to be known, so when the effect was produc'd in the miraculous deliverance of the children of Israel, and the bringing them over the Red Sea, by nothing less, than turning the fluid element into a dry ground; he had now nothing for him more to do: he had now made his power sufficiently known in him: and as he had all his life-time been so wicked, and there were no hopes of his conversion or amendment, which we may observe by his following the children of Israel with all his men of war, when they were departed, with his own free leave and consent given to Moses for that purpose; and as God had bless'd him all his life with the temporal blessings of riches and prosperity, when this last miracle was wrought, and the children of Israel were safely conducted out of Egypt, then to restore the sea to it's former fluidity, and permit him to be swallow'd up in it, was not a partial or despotic act in God, because

it could not have swallow'd up him, and all his host, had they not ventur'd on this furious and obstinate pursuit, which must be suppos'd their own act and deed, if going out and staying at home may be suppos'd to be free and voluntary actions. For what reason could he possibly imagine all the previous miracles were wrought in his sight, if not on their account, to deliver them from his bondage? and by parity of reason, he might have inferr'd that God would defeat any project of his against them, when he had so abundantly exerted his power before in their favour; in consequence whereof, he might have rationally concluded, that divine vengeance would not fail to pursue him, whilst he was endeavouring to overtake them. I cannot in all this find out, that God acted with more partiality towards him, than he did with respect to his servant Job, who charged not God foolishly, tho' he had stript him not only of all the blessings of life, but also inflicted on him sore boils by the hands of Satan*: he took from him his children, cattle, friends and every thing that might mitigate the common uneasinesses of life†, and this, not because he (like Pharaoh) had offended, for it was at a time, when God himself said of him, that he was a perfect and upright man‡. To all this his reply was, not like Pharaoh's, who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? but with much resignation to his heavenly Father's will, he only said, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

Now,

* Job, ch. i. ver. 22.
Ibid. ver. 15 to 19.

† Job, ch. ii. ver. 7.
‡ Job, ch. i. ver. 8.

Now, to our shallow understandings, this should seem more repugnant to the equity of God, than his dealings with wicked Pharaoh. There is, indeed, this difference in the latter from the former, and this comfortable doctrine deducible from it, namely, that as he was a perfect man, so we must conclude, that these afflictions were to him only probational, and such where-with it often pleases God to try his faithful servants and favourites; whereas those of the other were executive ones; sent to destroy, if possible, the man of sin, or to rectify, as it were, his wrong principles. And as I have before shewn, Pharaoh deserved in many respects to be thus treated by his maker, in these his temporal dispensations towards him, so now I would beg leave to hint, that we hear nothing of an eternal condemnation to be inflicted upon him, nothing of any eternal reprobation, with regard to his future state, to be determin'd against him, any more than against the rest of mankind: and as to the probability of his dying impenitent, here our tow'ring searches, and curious prying into the mysterious ways of God must stop. And as it does not seem probable to us that he did repent, we must here leave him to the unconditional mercies of Almighty God, by which I mean that possibility of forgiveness, which only presides in the Divine Mind, and is no doubt, agreeable to his nature, tho inadequate to our comprehensions of his modes of acting: and we may rest assur'd, that in the great scope of God's providence, in the resolutions of his will, and in his determinate councils, if we suppose him to have

have any in regard to Pharaoh, as to the use he made of him at this particular juncture; he will not punish him for actions, which were not his own, and if he was at all acted upon, by unavoidable impulse in any part of his behaviour, (which I can scarce believe he was) any action, in consequence of this impulse, will never be imputed to him as a crime; for the ways of the Lord are all equal. And if he in the moment of immersion, lifted up a repentant heart to God; I doubt not, but that it was in mercy accepted to the saving of his soul; for God's beloved attribute is mercy, it is that in which his soul delighteth. That the punishments inflicted on him were only temporal, we have shewn, as far as we are able, or can pretend to, and to scrutinize further would be impious: and to these punishments for disobedience, we see even his own chosen people, for whom he exerted himself in so many miraculous ways, were subject, since they were not suffer'd to come to that land of promise, which they were always led to expect, would be the reward of their obedience: but as they rebell'd against God in the wilderness, and provoked him in the desert, in consequence thereof, they were cut off short, and depriv'd of the fruition of the land of Canaan: which was the ultimate end of their wishes, and the summit of their ambition, and most likely of his too: for so dull and groveling, so wicked and sinful a mind, could never entertain thoughts of that glorious state, which is to be the reward of spiritualized and immortalized souls, when freed from the fetters of their clayey

clayey tabernacles: the hopes of the journeying Israelites were only to be in possession of that good land, which we christians, to whom life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel*, plainly see was only a type and figure of the things not seen, and a figurative representation of an inheritance, incorruptible, and full of glory, eternal in the heavens.†

Hence it is that we act upon other views; our desires terminate not here, but we are ready and glad to lay hold of a Saviour's blood, to expiate and atone for our guilt, and to lay claim by covenant, through him, (to that house not made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens, whose builder and maker is God) whose satisfaction must have been needless to have been procured, and when procured, could not have answered any valuable purpose, in case a pre-ordination of reprobation against us, or of election, in favour of us, as to our future state, had been determined in the Divine Mind: for how should God exact a satisfaction for crimes he forced his creatures, by the constituency of their natures, to commit? or how could Christ, when his sufferings were performed, place it to the account of sinful man, as he knew no sin himself, and when man could not be called sinful, whose acts, if pre-determined, could not be his own? Or, how can it seem likely, that the Almighty should insist on a mediator of a new covenant, if mankind were not pre-covenanted, and in a state of performing or not performing it? which they

* 2 epist. Tim. ch. i. ver. 10.

† 1 ep. Pet. ch. i. ver. 4.
2 ep. Cor. ch. v. ver. 1.

they could not be, in a determined state of existence: all which, I think, gives us a most probable hypothesis of man's self-agency, and freedom of will.

1st. Hence let us learn, first, that as the Israelites, by their disobedience, miss'd of their earthly Canaan, so we may, by like impenitency, fall short of our eternal Canaan.

2dly. Secondly, that if they thought it so great a reward for the performance of the Jewish dispensation, which was a hard one, in respect of our Christian, and most perfect law of liberty; if they, I say, thought it such a reward, and strove so hard to attain to the perfection which was to fit them to inherit a temporal kingdom; if they so earnestly pray'd to be admitted to the possessing a momentary enjoyment, or if they thought it such a loss to miss of this transient bliss, how ought we Christians to fight the godly warfare betwixt our own lusts, and the laws of our creator, who have such an eternal weight of glory in our view? How ought the recompence of reward, which we aspire after, and which now is not only of grace, but of debt †, if we perform our part of the covenant not perfectly, but as well as we are able? (though then it was nothing but a perfect unfinning obedience that entitled them to the promises.) How ought (I say) so great a reward to excite our obedience to such easy terms? We ought most certainly so to run as to obtain*, to be always striving to subject the law of our members, to that of our minds†, and not suffer them to be brought

† Rom. c. iv. ver. 4. * 1 ep. Cor. c. ix. ver. 24. † Rom. c. vii. ver. 23.

brought into subjection to the law of sin†, convinc'd through hope, founded upon the eternal word of the God of truth, that as he sent his son to die for us, so he will also freely with him give us all things‡: and we are not now oblig'd to a perfect unfinning obedience; but if any man sin we have an advocate with the father||, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. If we sin now, in vain at the day of judgment shall we plead predestination, or that we believ'd it, and liv'd in such belief, when we had a clear light to go by; nor on the other hand will the righteousness of the righteous, be so far taken from him, as to solve it in a determin'd pre-election, but he will find to his comfort, that the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and in that he shall live. In regard to all mankind suffering through Adam; I would observe, that whoever shall examine himself, will find (I believe sufficient reason to think, that under the same temptation, he would have committed the same offence, which every man (perhaps) will find a proof of, from yielding to every slight temptation from without, and every evil suggestion from within. So let us not charge God foolishly, and make that a predestinated action, which upon reflection we may know, was in our own power either to have done, or left undone.

Thus we see, how contrary this doctrine is to nature of the great, the good, and the merciful God; but as our adversaries think they have one objection more, I'll endeavour to obviate that al-

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so:

† 1 epist. Cor. ch. ix. ver. 27.

‡ Rom. ch. viii. ver. 32.

|| 1 epist. John, chap. i. ver. 2,
2.

to: they say, that under the gospel dispensation, they are shocked to see Judas stigmatized as a son of perdition, and wonder he should be called a devil among the Apostles, that he should be the only lost disciple, and can alledge nothing but the determination of God against him. To this I answer, that till the son of God had suffer'd, Judas was under the same apprehensions, with the rest of the Jews, as to a temporal kingdom of the Messias, and consequently could have no more or greater claim to the covenant of grace, than the rest of mankind had in these times, when pride, ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and hardness of belief overwhelm'd the whole Jewish nation: and then we must consider, that to whom much is given (either of natural or reveal'd light) of him will be the more required*: and our Saviour might justly call him a devil, and a son of perdition†, who having been always with him, and an eye witness of the miracles he wrought and had so far been convinc'd by them, as to follow him even unto death; yet for all this he seeing, saw not§, i. e. not with faith, but his heart was still full of the old leaven of covetous desires and slavish fears; and tho' he followed Christ, and saw what hardships he underwent, the miracles he wrought, and the good he did; yet he could not yield, (being enslav'd by his sinful passions) a ready obedience to his laws: he could not by these things he saw more effectually, (tho' he must surely more convictively) have been induced to believe, that Jesus was the Messias, than

* Luke, ch. xii. ver. 48.

† John, ch. vi. ver. 70.

Ibid.

ch. xvii. ver. 12.

§ Matt. ch. xiii. ver.

than those who nail'd him to his cross: seeing this, therefore we are not to believe, that God acted with any more injustice towards him than towards Pharaoh, but to believe and suppose (as we certainly have reason,) that Judas acted against greater light, and thus by his impiety, unbelief, and hardness of heart, provoked God to withdraw his grace from him, who had so greatly abus'd such powerful efforts, and when that happens to the best of men, they have no sufficiency of themselves, to do any thing that is good; whence we may conclude, that Judas was properly by his own fault, the son of perdition, and not by any predetermination of God against him: and this we may gather from his own words, I have betrayed innocent blood||. He does not say, I was predestinated to do it, but looks upon it as a free act of his own; and no doubt, could he have thought of such a subterfuge, he would have been very glad to have screen'd himself under it: but on the contrary, whoever reads his history will find, that through the whole, he acted in every shape against the conviction of his own mind: and further, our Saviour's account of him is declarative, and not prophetic or determinative: he does not say, I have chosen you twelve and one of you will be a devil, or one of you, I will have to be so, but one of you is a devil*: and this Judas confesses himself, when self-conscious of his guilt, he comes again to bring back the thirty pieces of silver to the high priest, and says, I have betrayed innocent blood†. Thus far, I think, I have shewn

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|| Matt. c. xxvii. v. 4. * John, c. vi. ver. 70. † Matt. c. xxvii. v. 4.

the folly of this doctrine, and it's contrariety both to the nature of God and man, and have I hope enervated the objections brought against those scriptures, which seem upon a cursory reading to favour this doctrine; and should now,

IV. Fourthly, consider the great and evil influence it has, on those two sorts of people, which I propos'd to consider under this head, but having dwelt so long on the three former, I shall refer this to another discourse, and only [†] hint at the great cause of thankfulness we have to Almighty God, for giving us a means of salvation, by the death of his Son; and surely if any thing is worthy our thanks, this is, that we have access with boldness to the throne of grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. When we think on the amazing condescension of the Son of God, on the sufferings he endur'd for our sakes, can we help having our hearts burn within us, with a joyous glow, like that of the two men going to Emmaus[†], whom our Saviour join'd and convers'd with on the road? what thanks are sufficient to be given to that God, who has thought fit to graft us, who were once wild branches[‡], into the true olive tree, and thereby make us capable of receiving a reward of good works, by his having perfectly and fully satisfied his Father's anger for the sins of man, tho' he knew no sin, and tho' no guile could be found in his mouth[§]: this consider'd, must, a ratiōe, absolutely confute predestination, and nip it in the bud: for how

could

† Luke, c. xxiv. ver. 13.

‡ Rom. c. xi. ver 24.

§ 1 ep. Pet. c. ii. ver. 22.

could Christ suffer willingly, and God the Father accept of his sacrifice, if they both knew, they had determin'd mankind in general, or in particular divisions of them, to be happy or miserable, even before they existed? or how could Christ be said to die for the sins of the whole world, when part of the world were so circumstanc'd? if those who were baptized for the dead, in the apostles times, were baptized in vain*; because they had no hope in a risen Christ? how much more vain must the death of Christ be to those, who upon this supposition, must have been pre-ordained to bliss or misery? a thing so repugnant to reason and common sense, that I wonder it could ever enter into the heart of man.

2dly. Secondly, we have great cause of thankfulness, that we have the opportunity of the word of God brought down to our capacities: (as far as is necessary for us, since *quod supra nos est, non est nobis*) and whatever is absolutely necessary, is plain to us: we can easily see God's promises and threatnings, on our performance or neglect of his laws; and tho' we cannot offer up to him a perfect sinless obedience, because in many things we offend all, and there is no one living that sinneth not†, yet now, since we know that Christ our passover was crucified for us, and that his blood will atone for our guilt, and that when the anger'd God is going to punish, he will call to mind his covenant in Christ, even as he beheld the blood of the Jewish sacrificed lamb, under which Christ was typified, we may rest
satisfied,

* 1 ep. Cor. c. xv. ver. 29.

† Jam. c. iii. ver. 2.

satisfied; that for his sake his anger will be turn'd away§.

3dly. Let us endeavour to search the scriptures daily, because as disciples of Christ, we ought so to do||, and as free agents we may do it: but then observe, it must be with humility, as we are dependent creatures; and therefore in things which we cannot comprehend, we ought to yield a ready faith, as to divine truths; such truths, as our own deepest searches will never let us into the full knowledge of, whilst we are cloathed with the veil of flesh: we have nothing more to do, with the incomprehensible mysteries, but to confess, that such knowledge is too deep for us, we cannot attain unto it†, for secret things belong to God, but those which are revealed, to us and to our children for ever‡. And this necessarily brings me to the fourth and last advice I shall offer, which is,

4thly. That we may all endeavour to get rid of every false opinion, neither resting in an Antinomian faith, nor being terrified at the Predestinarian's unreasonable suggestions in regard to our future state; not at all believing, on the one hand, that we are reprobated to damnation; nor, on the other, that without our own works co-operating with God's, we shall be saved: but let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, that we may shew forth our faith by our works, and be ready to give an account of the hope that is in us†. This will be a rational

§ Isa. c. xii. ver. 1.

Hos. c. xiv. v. 5.

|| John, c. v. ver. 39.

† Psalm cxxxix. ver. 6.

Deut. c. xxix. ver. 29.

* Phil. c. ii. ver. 12.

Jam. c. ii. ver. 18.

† 1 ep. Pet. chap. iii. ver. 15.

Epist. Jud. ver. 3.

saving faith, agreeable to the Christian scheme,
 and answerable to our professing and contending
 for that faith, which was once delivered to the
 saints: let us so behave our selves here, that
 when our lord shall come, he may find us duly
 prepared, to be made partakers of his everlast-
 ing rest, to enter with him into that perfect state,
 where there shall be no more doubting, but
 every thing shall be made plain; where we shall
 for ever enjoy the most transcendent of all bleff-
 ings, even the beatific vision, the sight of God
 himself*, and know even as we are known, and
 shall not want to place our refuge in a pre-elec-
 tion to blifs, but shall have the satisfaction to find,
 that through Christ's merits†, accompanied with
 our own actions, it will be given us as our
 reward; and shall also find, what is additional
 to all considerations, that it shall then be, with-
 out limitation and without end.

* 1 epist. Cor. c. xiii. ver. 12.

† 1 epist. John, c. iii. ver. 2.



Sermon

Sermon VIII.

God's justice in his dealings vindicated,
and the folly of Predestination shewn.

Ezek. chap. xviii. ver. 29, 32.

Yet saith the house of Israel, the way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

IN a former discourse on these words, I propos'd to consider the ridiculous and absurd doctrine of predestination, which is so strenuously maintained by persons, who are enemies to the truth of the holy scriptures; and who are continually endeavouring to make other weak, tho' honest-minded Christians to believe it too, to the great prejudice of their souls, and to the hindrance of their comfort and satisfaction in the practice of their duty.

I went through the three first considerations, under which, I shew'd the stupidity of the doctrine, from the nature of God, the nature of man, and the explicate meaning of the word: I

come now to the fourth thing which I propos'd, which was to give some advice to two sets of persons, both greatly prejudiced hereby: the first are those, whom the belief thereof encourages to go on in a sinful course; and the other persons almost as unhappy, who are (by an assent to, and belief of its possibility) drove to despair of God's eternal mercies: I shall now perform this engagement, and then, fifthly, conclude by applying the doctrine in a proper manner.

I. First then, I am to consider those, who encourage themselves in a sinful course, by saying, that as their eternal state is fixt and determined, there remains for them no redemption; and that therefore, do they what they will, as they shall be everlastingly happy or miserable after death; so they will enjoy the present life, whilst it is in their power, and are determin'd to solace themselves with the momentary enjoyments of this world, for these two reasons: because on the one hand (say they) if we are of the elect, these things will not be imputed to us, as guilt, since we must be happy; and on the other, if we are reprobated to damnation, then we shall have no other time for happiness, but as soon as we are dead, we shall enter into a state of eternal, never-ending anguish: therefore will we eat and drink, for to morrow we die*.

In answer hereto, I will endeavour to shew the possibility and probability of God's mercies to them, admitting this to be their case, (which I have shewn from the nature of God to be impossible). For God has declar'd, that for his

name

* Isa. c. 22. ver. 13. 1 ep. Cor. c. 15. 32.

name sake, he will defer his anger, and for his praise, he will not cut them off†: and he himself in condescension to our capacities, by another prophet declares, that he will repent of the evil he design'd to do, or execute‡: and so perhaps, God Almighty may likewise forgive those who have had these unworthy thoughts of him and his goodness, tho' he had once on account of their many provocations design'd to suffer them to weary out his patience; tho' he had declar'd that he would not always strive with man§, yet he may notwithstanding favour them still with the continuance of his goodness, as far as is consistent with his other attributes of wisdom, justice and power; which consideration is,

1. First a strong incitement to them to endeavour, to regain that favour which they had justly forfeited; tho' God never had (as he certainly never did) determine his purposes against them, before their formation, as they are weak enough to imagine, and wicked enough to assert. This

2. Secondly, is surely no small matter of joy to them, to find that notwithstanding their unworthy, wicked, and blasphemous thoughts of God, there is mercy with him, that he may be feared||; to find, I say, that his mercy is not clean gone for ever, and that he has not suffer'd them to be snatched away, whilst there was none to help*; but that they have still time to turn to God, who, whenever they do, will also himself in mercy turn to them, and so lift up the light,

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of

† Isa. c. 48. ver. 9.

‡ Jer. ch. xviii. ver. viii.

§ Gen. ch. vi. ver. 3.

|| Psa. 130. ver. iv.

* Psa. 77. ver. viii.

of his countenance upon them, as to soften their obdurate hearts, and thence take an opportunity to be gracious unto them. Cease then vain man, whoever thou art, that hast at any time entertained and cherished these thoughts of God, merely on purpose to have a plea for living wickedly: cease any longer to cavil at these truths, which thou hast read and endeavour'd to pervert to thine own, and others ruin: “ not that I would
 “ be here understood to countenance the locking
 “ up the scriptures, as is the usage of the Roman
 “ church, or that we should entirely give up our
 “ reasoning faculties, with which God has en-
 “ dowed us to a priest, and to lay aside the on-
 “ ly true guide the holy scriptures; for fear of
 “ being mistaken, in departing from, or not
 “ making our selves members of that church,
 “ of which he is, as he pretends, the infallible
 “ guide and head, whilst he is indeed no more
 “ than the man of sin describ'd by St. Paul*:
 “ no! no! far from that, I know, and am sen-
 “ sible, that all holy scriptures were written for
 “ our learning†, and in consequence we ought
 “ to read them: because the not doing it would
 “ be an affront, and offering despite to that spirit
 “ of God†, who gave them to us for our improve-
 “ ment in knowledge, and the work of our sal-
 “ vation.

“ God himself says to his people, whom (dur-
 “ ring the Jewish theocracy,) he condescended
 “ to talk with, even when he reprov'd them for
 “ their faults, come my people, let us reason to-
 gether :

* 2 Thess. ch. 2. ver. 3. to 12.

† Heb. ch. x, ver 29.

† 2 Tim. ch. iii. ver. 16.

“ gether*: and to the prophet, judge now be-
 “ twixt me and my vineyard, what could have
 “ been done more to my vineyard, that I have
 “ not done unto it†? in this he appeals to man’s
 “ senses, to his reason and understanding: and
 “ therefore I say, if God sees fit to make use of
 “ our senses, in revealing his will and ways to
 “ us, we ought not implicitly to believe (as the
 “ church of Rome would have us) that every
 “ mode of doctrine is infallibly true which they
 “ teach, when it contradicts every sense we have
 “ and at the same time is repugnant to the word
 “ of God, which are the very reasons, why they
 “ so industriously and politickly endeavour to
 “ hide it from the laity.

“ For instance, should one of these infallible
 “ folks tell me, that I existed from all eternity,
 “ or from the beginning of time, I ought not to
 “ believe him, because I sensibly find, I was not
 “ always in being, and can give no reason but
 “ the will of my creator, why I am so now, and
 “ I plainly can discover, that I am not a self-exis-
 “ tent, but a dependent being. Again, should
 “ he assure me with the greatest confidence, and
 “ with ever so dogmatical an air, that the bread
 “ and wine in the Eucharist are really and sub-
 “ stantially, the body and blood of Christ, I
 “ ought not to be thus deceived, in a thing, which
 “ so palpably contradicts all my corporeal senses,
 “ any more than in the other case.

I have made this deviation from the subject we
 are upon only to shew, that altho’ we ought not
 to read the scriptures presumptuously or pretend to
 understand

* Isa, chap. i, ver, 18.

† Isa, chap. v. ver. 3. 4.

understand all the hidden mysteries of those sacred oracles, yet that we ought to be daily conversant in those divine pages, and to read them with an humble hope of receiving an improvement from them; which if we do, we shall be sure of being let into all necessary knowledge: but to return to the point in hand: canst thou O predestinarian, to whom I am directing this address, canst thou suppose, that that God whose existence is in, and of himself alone, and who in his great mercy call'd thee and all mankind out of nothing into being, would have done this on purpose eternally to damn thee? It is an unbecoming thought in any person to imagine, that he who is the originé of all perfection, the source of all our mercies, had any occasion for our existence, previous to his having gave us that existence; who long before our creation, had legions of more exalted perfect beings, declaring his praises, and ten thousand times ten thousand ministering unto him†: and if it is derogatory to his honour, even to suppose any necessity in his nature, of having an accession made to it, by our being created; be assured, O man, whoever thou art, that thou art much more guilty to think he made thee on purpose to damn thee, on purpose to sport himself as it were, with thy misery; and be assured without repentance, thou shalt be met with by him to thy confusion and amazement, when he shall come to shake terribly the earth†: then wilt thou wish, that thy whole life had been one continued act of praise and adoration of his goodness and perfections.

Instead

† Dan. ch. vii. ver. 10.
Rev. ch. v. ver. 11.

| † Isa. chap. ii. ver. 19. 21.

Instead of the vain cavils, which thou hast presumptuously entertain'd, and with so eager an intenseness strove to impress on other weak but honest minds, to thy own eternal destruction, and the destruction of their internal peace.

Turn but thy thoughts inward upon thy self, and see if by searching, thou canst find out the method of thy own existence: look on the vegetable world, and there also thou wilt soon be stopp'd: for such knowledge is too wonderful for thee, thou canst not attain unto it*: thy most subtle penetration cannot dive so deep, nor thy most aspiring knowledge soar to the height thereof: it is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper then hell, what canst thou know †?

Thou canst indeed see the effects of omnipotence produc'd, which should raise thy wonder, not thy proud searchings: for look but on any, the most minute created being, and even in that the deepest study of thy whole life would be two little, thoroughly to account for its existence, on the the reason of God's creating it: and if these things are thus above thee, how much more is it out of thy power to fathom God's incomprehensibleness, and the reason for his making man in his own likeness, at a time, when he himself was high above all praise, and could have no addition made to his glory by the homage of imperfect man: thou canst not by searching find out God, thou canst not find out the Almighty to perfection. And if in all these things, thou findest thyself baffled, how presumptuous is it in thee, to pretend to assert, that God made thee and many others,

* Psalm cxxxix. ver. 6.

† Job, chap. xi. ver. 8.

others, for no other reason but to punish thee eternally; and that too when he from whom all power comes, give thee no acting faculties to do his will, nor power to refrain doing what he forbids, cease then fond man, from these sinful conceits, and think not that thy imagining thou hast no power, will free thee from guilt, if thou ledest an impenitent life: for then thou wilt be punished not with a few stripes*, as one who knew not his master's will, but with many, as one who might have known it if he would.

Therefore repent and turn from your evil ways, that so iniquity may not be your ruin†: pray, as St. Paul bids Ananias, that the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven‡.

2. Secondly, there is another objection yet raised, that God declares eternal punishments on temporal crimes; and this is not agreeable to his justice, and can be only so to that degree of uncontrollable power, he is self-possessed of: to this I answer, that at our baptism, we by sureties enter into a covenant right, to which is annexed certain laws and certain conditions, in regard to our performance or non performance of our part of them: on the one hand is promis'd never ending rewards and blessedness, in case of our obedience; and on the other are threatned as certain and as eternal punishments in case of disobedience. Who art thou then, O man, who thus repliest against God§? and what presumption would it be to charge God foolishly||, and pretend to

* Luke, ch. xii. ver. 47, 48.

† Ezek. ch. xviii. ver. 30.

‡ Acts; ch. viii. ver. 22.

§ Rom. ch. ix. ver. 20.

|| Job, ch. i. ver. 22.

to challenge his attributes, whose ways are equal, tho' ours are unequal. He has in great mercy also, as I have before observed, promis'd to us an eternal happiness, upon our willing tho' imperfect obedience, and if he thus promises in this case eternal happiness; where is the injustice if he inflicts everlasting punishments in case of our obstinate persisting in an evil course? tho' he has declar'd, that if the righteous man forsakes his righteousness, and does evil, he shall surely die*; yet he has also said, that upon repentance, tho' our sins had been like scarlet, they should be wash'd away, and that tho' they were red like crimson, they should be white as snow†, and then he appeals to his own people in the words of my text! O house of Israel, are not my ways equal, are not your ways unequal?

To all this you are ready to reply, that God will punish us, in case we refuse to come into the proposition, or subscribe the laws thus set us. And does this any way clash with justice? no, not at all; because it would be the highest affront possible to the majesty of heaven to refuse our allegiance; when we consider the way, whereby salvation was brought down to us.

It was no condescension on our parts, no desires of ours after such happiness, because it was a mystery past our comprehensions, and had we thought of it, it would have been a bold presumption in us to have desired such a condescension from God himself, as he (unsought to) gave. Could any one, think you, conscious of his demerit, well acquainted with the odious nature of

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* Ezek. ch. xviii. ver. 24.

† Isa. ch. i. ver. 18.

fin, and of it's disagreeableness to the pure majesty of God, have desir'd him to make his only begotten son to be sacrificed for us; and yet this has he done to deliver us from the power of satan; and to the end that he might receive us into bliss, and also at the same time have his justice satisfied: he has deliver'd him up for us all, that we through faith in him might be saved*: 'twas on this wise, this merciful, and reconciling errand, that he sent his only begotten, well-beloved son, that son in whom he was well pleased, the express image of his person, and suffered him to be made an offering for us all; without which, we could not rationally, tho' we might arbitrarily, have been saved, but must have perish'd in our original sin: and how ought it to raise our wonder and our thanks to God, to think that he would be reconciled to us, when nothing but the blood of Christ being shed, could atone for our guilt: and, moreover, in this also, God hath recommended his love to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us†; when no other method, than so perfect a sacrifice would satisfy his justice: but thanks be to his glorious majesty; he came and rescued us from death, at a time when we were in the depth of the deluge of sin, plung'd low in wickedness, and ready to sink down, either into a state of non-existence or eternal misery; how ought these truths upon reflection to raise our thankful hearts, to a gratitude some way answerable to this great salvation? which, God ex mero motu, or from his

* Jom. ch. viii. ver. 32.
I ph. ch. ii. ver. 8.

| † Rom. ch. v. ver. 8.

his good will has brought about. Is it possible, that any after this can be so vilely injurious to the mercy of God, as to imagine, that after he has made such gracious overtures of peace to us; after all this striving (if I may so speak) of God with himself, and after he has so solemnly declared, that as he liveth, he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dies; that tho' he purpos'd to destroy a nation, he would repent him of the evil he design'd and do it not, but would turn in mercy toward them: can any, I say, be so injurious to his mercy, as to pretend to say, that the prime cause of his creating him, or any one man was to damn him, as they do, who hold this impious doctrine of predestination: nay, or even, if you would compliment his mercy, it would injure in some sense his wisdom and justice to suppose, that he had elected any absolutely and exclusively of their own acts, to bliss everlasting; tho' this is more agreeable to the nature of God, who may have mercy, on whom he will, and dispense his favours in what proportion he please*.

Contemplate our maker we may, and imitate him too in all his imitable and communicable perfections, his mercy, love, &c. and we may endeavour to follow the example of his great humility, but to fathom him is impossible. To adore him is in our power, tho' not perfectly: but till that time come, when hope shall be turn'd into enjoyment, every desire lost in fruition, and our prayers be turn'd into everlasting hallelujahs: till then we must content ourselves with believing

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* Rom. ch. ix. ver. 18.

what he dictates to the pensive and the contrite heart, by the still voice of his spirit: and then when he who gave us our life, and who came to redeem us from our deserved death, shall come to be our judge, we shall enter with him into his everlasting rest; then shall our faculties be perfectly enlarg'd, and as perfectly satisfied: for then, (and not till then) shall we be able to comprehend those infallible truths, which after our most inquisitive search here we must remain ignorant of, and cannot pretend to fathom, by reason of the frailty of our nature: then shall we see all the ends and causes of those proceedings, which now seem so wonderful and strange to us. Then shall we see why the ungodly flourish like a green bay-tree by the river side*, whilst the righteous are persecuted with many storms. Then the infinite mazes of God's providence which so puzzle us here, will be attained and comprehended by our enlarged capacities: then shall we see the end of those men, who had us some time in derision†, and whom we were foolish enough to envy; and then shall the righteous lift up their heads with joy, whilst the predestinarians, those affronters of God's mercy and justice, shall stand trembling before his footstool, and confess their presumption; but too late, for he will plunge them quick into the lake of fire, from which they will confess, they had once an opportunity to have escaped: then will they cry to the mountains to fall on them, and to the hills to cover them§, but in vain! it will be then too late, there will be no

* Psalm xxxvii. ver. 35.

† Psalm cxix. ver. 51.

| § Hos. ch. x. ver. 8.

no sheltering them from the vengeance of him, whose eye is in every place, and who sees all things at one view: then the still voice which once invited them to repent and turn to God, will be chang'd into avenging thunder, into a, go ye cursed into everlasting burnings*.

God's ministers, who wisely warned them, in this world, to be reconciled to God, will then, for ought we know, be turn'd into destroying angels, as to them, by being the executioners of his tremendous justice; and instead of any longer admonishing, shall only assist to reward them according to their demerits, by sinking them into everlasting woe. These are the reasons, whereby we may see, that the ways of the Lord are all equal, just and good, and what I have endeavoured to prove on these several accounts.

1. First, to prevent in those persons I have been now speaking to, too deep a scrutiny into the mysteries which God has not revealed.

2. Secondly, to prevent a too groundless hope and presumption on God's mercies, whilst we continue in sin. And,

3. Thirdly, to prevent in those people, whom I promised in the second place to consider, too great a despondency of God's omnipotent goodness, who knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust †, weak and frail in ourselves, and soon apt to fall away from our own steadfastness, if he does not guide us by the dictates of his co-operating grace; thro' which (if we have it) we shall be able so to conduct our lives, that whether we be early or late converted from our former

* Matt. ch. xxy. ver. 41.

† Psalm ciii. ver. 14.

former sins, we shall through the merits of our redeemer, and through faith in his blood, inherit the promises, even eternal life.

Tho' the presumptuous sinner's case is rather the worst, yet there is another almost as unhappy a set of people, who by believing the possibility of this doctrine are led to despair of God's mercies, tho' they do by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality*. To these I say, that their despondency is unreasonable, and proceeds from the natural weakness of their intellectual faculties, or from the indisposition of their bodies, or from some inward cause, which prevents their judging rightly of their state towards God; and so makes them give into the opinion, that God hath determined their case, from the beginning of or previous to their existence, whereby they are drove to despair of his mercies, though they are not conscious to themselves of their wilful continuance in any known sin; and though they have made it the study of their lives to please God, and to act agreeably to his laws, as far as they are able. yet they imagine, from the gloominess of their dispositions, and those dismal apprehensions which they have formed of God's goodness, that they shall not be accepted of him; but that, on the contrary, they are the haters of God, whom he will despise, and that to them will belong eternal punishments, for having turned God's laws behind their backs, and cast away his commandments from them. And thus they most unreasonably deprive themselves of all that real joy, which the considera-

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* Rom. ch. ii. ver. 7.

tion of God's mercies would otherwise afford them. They say further, that although they have at times some small glimmerings of hope, yet then these hopes are built on too groundless a presumption, seeing that they are deserving of nothing but the wrath of God, and his fierce anger. But here I would desire them to receive comfort from the words of God by his prophet Isaiah: For their shame they shall have double joy, and for their confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: that therefore in their land they shall possess double, and everlasting joy shall be to them. And again, by the same prophet, Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee; thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and have not cast you away, as your vain and weak imaginations make you fear*.

And are not these sufficient encouragements to support their drooping spirits to find that God hath not cast them off, and that tho' he sometimes afflicts, it is not on purpose to vex them, but only to induce them to cry unto the Lord in their trouble, which when they do, he will deliver them from their distress†: and if they (thus laden with grief) seek to him, he will bear their burthens, and give them rest; and they may be assured, that these are only the suggestions of the evil one, who takes opportunities from their melancholy tempers to lead them to despair. In order to illustrate this more fully, and to remove their doubts; I shall consider severally the chief causes they themselves alledge for their despondency,

* Isa. c. xli. ver. 9 and 10.

† Psa. cvii. ver. 28.

dency, and which seem principally to distract their minds ; and sometimes shake their trust in God, and confidence in that sacrifice of Christ, which was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world : which causes are as follow, viz.

1st, That they are sinners, in general, with the rest of mankind.

2dly, That they had once an opportunity of grace, but that they have wearied out God's goodness and mercy, and have sinned past the day of grace.

3dly, That they can never do enough to merit, (as they call it) from the hand of God.

4thly, That whenever they endeavour to perform any part of their duty, whether it be prayer or any other, they have so many fears of offering up to God the lame in sacrifice * ; that therefore they think they had better omit a duty so essential, than commit a sin which they esteem greater ; but they should remember, that not he that flies the means of grace, but he that patiently endures to the end, and conquers these groundless fears (which are only the suggestions of Satan) shall be saved, and inherit a Crown of life.†

5thly, They urge, that there is a vast difficulty of attaining to a perfection suitable to the great distance they stand in to our great Creator ; and that they cannot attain it, tho' they think they ought ; and thus again they hinder their progress after happiness, and in consequence of this are led to despair.

6thly, They urge, that our Saviour says, strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life,

* Mal. ch. i. ver. 8.

† James, ch. i. ver. 12.

life, and few there are who find it: and if but few righteous be saved, where shall they appear who are so self convicted, that they are not of that happy number.

7thly. And lastly, they accuse themselves of wanting that saving faith, without which it is impossible to please God§: they have not that faith which is so necessary to a true Christian's progress in his duty, and that the faith they have is no way productive of good works: that tho' in all things else they were perfect, yet by this want of faith, they fall under St. James's censure of breaking the whole law, by thus offending in one point, and in consequence are liable to God's eternal displeasure. Thus they by turning the saving knowledge delivered to us by Jesus Christ (through the weakness of their own minds) to their own uneasiness, torment themselves with groundless fears and anxieties, unfit themselves for a right performance of what they know, and at last sink into a despondency, worse than temporal death itself: all these objections I shall obviate, and speak to in their order.

And first, they object, that they are sinners with the rest of mankind. In answer to this, I say, that the original turpitude of our natures, as men subject since our fall to many temptations, is entirely cleansed and washed away by the blood of Christ, who came to take away the iniquity of us all, and to expiate and atone for our guilt by the sacrifice of himself: and his sacrifice is accepted on our part, instead of perfect and sin-

§ Heb. xi. v. 6.

¶ Heb. ix. v. 26.

less obedience: for he himself declares that he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

2. I would observe, that if God (before the sacrifice of Christ) would have saved a whole nation, (as he himself declares he would) could he have found therein but five righteous persons, how much more shall he, when he has made the Son of his love a sacrifice for all, freely in him give us all salvation? and therefore in consequence will not exclude them, who mean so well; and who would, as much as in them lies, perform the perfect will of God. But then,

2. Secondly, they object, that had they died before the day of grace was past they might have been saved: but as they have (with their added days) added sins to sins, and have provok'd God's wrathful indignation against them, so they can't claim the promise of God through Christ. To this I reply, that they know not whether God has set any bounds to his mercy, neither can they tell, when his mercies will be utterly exhausted: that this is limiting God's goodness, which is past comprehension, and almost disputing his veracity who has declared, that whensoever a sinner turns from the error of his ways, he shall save his soul alive; that (in this repentant state) tho' their sins were as scarlet, they should be done away, tho' they were red like crimson, they should be as wool. God hath also declared, as he liveth, he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dies: and our Saviour, that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance*: that
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* Luke, chap. xv. ver. 7.

eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it enter'd into the heart of man to conceive adequate notions of the blessings God bestows on those whom he accepts†: he is represented (most justly) as patient, forbearing, and long suffering, of great goodness, full of compassion, plenteous in mercy and loving kindness.‡ And viewing him in this admirable and amiable light, they should check these fears whenever they arise; readily should they embrace these offers of favour, and be so far from passing a judgment on themselves, which they are no ways capable of doing, that they should leave all to that judge, who judges right§. But,

3. Thirdly, say they, we are not worthy to offer God any sacrifice: the very saints are not pure in his sight*: and how much less such wretches, as have slighted his mercies, and have not been moved to obedience by these tenders of his love, how can they pretend to merit at the hand of God? To this let it be answered, and owned with them, that we have nothing but our miseries to call down God's mercies on us: for here indeed, one depth calls upon another||; the depth of our wants on the depth of his abundance; the depth of our sins, on the depth of his mercies; but nevertheless God has been graciously pleased, to say he will accept, if there be but a willing mind, according to that a man hath, and doth not condemn us for the omission of those duties we did not know how to perform; that there is nothing but a wilful violation of his laws, nay and almost a total rejection of

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† 1. Cor. ch. ii. ver. 9.

‡ Psal. lxxxvi. ver. 5.

§. Psal. 58. ver. 11.

* Job. ch. xxv. ver. 5.

|| Psal. xlii. ver. 7.

of him for their God, that will make him withdraw his grace from his people: that as God had been pleased to make the first overtures of mercy towards us, we ought (all of us) with an humble hope, thankfully to lay hold on the terms he offers: this, they say, they have done, but still that is nothing, they have yet no sufficiency of themselves to please God, and can therefore have no right to his mercies: but what says the apostle in answer hereto? he tells us our sufficiency is of God*, that it is he that makes us to will and to do of his good pleasure†: and that not in such an arbitrary manner, not with so powerful an influence, as will take away our self-agency, and with it our merit; but only by his spirit working with our spirit, to help us to do the things well pleasing unto God‡, and that we having once laid hold of the covenant of grace, if we like St. Peter, reach out our hand to our Saviour, and cry, Lord help us, tho' it be also like him, with diffidence of ourselves, he will reach out his saving help, and will encourage and enable us to conquer difficulties, equal to that of walking on the water: if we do (or strive and wish to do) our parts, we may then thro' Christ plead our title to the kingdom of God, and humbly claim a seat in that kingdom; that if to the best of our power we do our duty, then our reward is not of grace, but of debts: and this must needs comfort them for the present, if they have through faith a respect unto the recompence of reward||. But notwithstanding this there are new objections arise; and they urge,

4. Fourthly,

* 2 Cor. chap. iii. ver. 5.
† Phil. chap. ii. ver. 13.

‡ Heb. xiii. ver. 21.
§ Rom. chap. iv. ver. 4.
|| Heb. xi. 26.

4. Fourthly, that they being thus imperfect, can offer up to God no acceptable service; but that they are the lame in sacrifice, that must not be offered up, and which if they do, God will not accept them, and therefore they had better not approach the throne of grace, than come thus unworthily. But here let them remember, that Christ our passover was the only unspotted lamb that could be offered up*, the only sacrifice that could atone for the sins of the whole world; that now the sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken and a contrite heart†. Again, the scriptures are full of sentences, declaring God's readiness to forgive sins; that when we turn to him, he is always ready to receive us, through Christ, who died that we might live: that if, through the consideration of our manifold sins, we are humble and contrite, he will bless us, and abide with us for ever. And when any find that they are desirous, or ready to go through many tribulations for God's sake, he has promised they should not lose their reward: he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able‡, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape; either by removing it, or giving them strength and patience equal to the task: he is no such hard task-master, who requires us to make bricks without straw§, but, on the contrary, gives all men plentifully of his grace, to make them more than conquerors through Christ that loved us||, and gave himself for us as an acceptable sacrifice unto God.

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* 1 Cor. chap. v. ver. 7.

† Psa. li. ver. 17.

‡ 1 Cor. chap. x. ver. 13.

§ Exod. chap. v. ver. 7. 16.

|| Rom. chap. viii. ver. 37.

5. The fifth objection they start, is, that considering the vast distance betwixt man the created being, and God the eternal source of all existence, it is impossible for them to be made perfect enough to be acceptable: and thus is their progress in a religious course obstructed, through this fatal imagination of their being unworthy. But here again they must have recourse to the unerring rule, God's word, and apply to themselves the promises of God therein, where it is said, that they that trust in God, shall want no manner of thing that is good*, and consequently not his grace, which is the greatest good: this indeed is spoke by David, in respect of temporal goods and blessings, but I think it also very applicable to those transcendent goods, with which they shall be filled, who thus hunger and thirst after the righteousness of God. And therefore they may be assur'd, that whatever low and humble thoughts they may have of their own imperfections, the more they will be esteem'd by him, who knows the thoughts, to whom every desire of our souls is open and plain; and that altho' they are not perfect, they will be accepted of him, whose thoughts are high above our thoughts as the heavens are in comparison of the earth†: for he will accept true zeal, instead of sinless obedience. The consideration of God's greatness ought not to affright us, but only to have these following effects, (1) to work in our minds a firm faith that he is able and willing to help us in time of need; (2) to make us approach his throne with an humble and awful reverence, as fuitable as we are able, to his majesty,

* Psalm xxxiv. ver 10.

† Isa. ch. lv. ver. 8, 9.

ty, and to the consideration of the wide difference there is betwixt sinful dust and ashes, and him who is infinite, and far exalted above every perfection. And (3) this faith and humility naturally resulting from the inequality of essences in God and man, should drive away all desponding thoughts of our not being accepted; and we should at the same time that we behold in our reflective faculties the greatness of our God, consider him also as our merciful and loving father, and should therefore never cease to pray to him, and call upon him in all the exigencies, both of and for our souls and bodies.

6. The sixth objection they urge in plea for their despondency, is our Saviour's declaring, that strait is the gate and the way narrow that leads to life, and few there be that find it; and therefore to be sure they are not of this happy number: that it is easier for a camel (or cable) to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to get to heaven*: but these things are only spoke allegorically, to shew us, that these great rewards are not to be attain'd by carelessness and indolence, by sluggishness and sloth: no! to such, the way is very hard; tribulation and uneasiness, afflictions, crosses, disappointments, and a gate of death to life, are hard terms to him who now sits at his ease, and whose mind is as indolent as his body: but tho' to such it is hard, yet to others (such as I am now endeavouring to comfort) striving manfully to run the race†, will gain the prize: to such as will do this, the way is not inaccessible, the difficulty is not unsurmountable; tho' they will meet with conflicts too, but they must not be discouraged;

* Luke chap. xviii. ver. 25. † 1 Cor. chap. ix. ver. 24. 25.

raged; for the greater temptations they conquer,
 the more evil habits they break off, the more pa-
 tience they exercise, the greater will their re-
 ward seem, and really be, when they (after their
 journey of life is over) shall reach the haven
 where they would be, and receive the prize, for
 which they have been running; it will comparati-
 vely be to them like the fight of land to the voy-
 lager, who, by being tossed to and fro on the
 tempestuous waves, has been at his wits end*.
 Again, tho' this running, is by the Apostle
 peculiarly spoke of the Isthmian or Olympic games,
 where all ran, and that most eagerly, for a trifling
 prize, a meer nothing; and yet but one could re-
 ceive the reward; it is not so with the candidates
 for celestial honours: whoever now but in good
 earnest and to the best of their power strive (and
 our powers greatly depend on our constitutions
 and bodily strength, for which we are not an-
 swerable any further, than as we are necessary
 to the debilitating their powers of action) they
 shall obtain not only a temporal fading honour,
 not only a name or a title, not only a vegeta-
 tive crown, of parsley or of roses, which was
 the whole of what was offer'd to the combat-
 ants in the Olympic games, but they shall ob-
 tain a kingdom of glory, they shall be instated in
 eternal happiness, a happiness so fixt and perma-
 nent, as to admit of no alteration or diminution:
 and what is still more, their reward shall be
 eternal: a name and a title here shall not be
 perhaps any part of their portion, but in hea-
 ven: for they shall be called the beloved of
 God,

* Psalm cvii. ver. 27.

God, their names shall be written in the book of life†, and their honour shall consist in being the heirs of salvation for ever‡.

3. The Mosaic dispensation indeed contain'd laws, which neither we, nor our fore-fathers were able to bear*; but the coming of Christ has long since abolished those laws; and the religion he has substituted in their room is a perfect law of liberty§, and does not insist on a perfect and sinless obedience from us: but in case we sin, we have now an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous||: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and if the blood of bulls and goats was sufficiently expiatory towards the washing away the sins of the Jews; how much more grounds have we of hope, who have been washed and cleansed in the laver of Christ's unerring righteousness, and sinless obedience to his heavenly Father's will. This now is the accepted time: this now is the day of salvation, now is light come into the world§§: therefore let all despairers shake off their fears, for now is salvation (perhaps) nigher than when they believed**. Let them come with faith and lay hold on those precious promises, which in God are yea and amen††; and which will certainly restore to them that happiness they fancy lost.

4. Let it be matter of great joy to them, and all of us, to reflect on that mercy of God, who was pleased (in his own time) to set aside the Jews,

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† Phil. ch. iv. ver. 3.

‡ Heb. ch. i. ver. 14.

* Acts, ch. xv. ver. 10.

§ James, ch. i. ver. 25.

|| 1 John ii. ver. 1.

§§ 2 Cor. vi. ver. 2. John, ch. iii. ver. 19.

** Rom. xiii. ver. 11.

†† 2 Cor. i. ver. 20.

who were once his peculiar people, the true olive tree; and to call us, who once knew not God, to his terms of acceptance in Christ, that he should thus name us beloved, who were not beloved, and make us his people, who were not his people*: to him, therefore, let us give continual thanks and praise for these his inestimable benefits, who hath thus redeemed us from the slavery of Satan, and hath given us this assurance of hope in the death of his son.

7thly. And lastly, they object their want of this saving faith in the promises, and therefore they can't come with boldness to the throne of grace †, and that tho' they sometimes believe, yet is their faith weak and not productive of good works; and that therefore, tho' they (in every thing else) walked according to the scripture rules, to the best of their knowledge, yet they stand justly liable to St. James's censure of breaking the whole law, by thus offending in one point; that it is by faith they must be sav'd, and that of course wanting that, they must be damned ‡. These things are only the force of a distempered body and mind, thus to doubt of God's unlimited mercies, and to believe him capable of that, which is in its own nature most unworthy of him, namely cruelty; whilst they have nothing more to do, but to offer up their constant prayers to God, for the graces of faith and perseverance, and to leave off these unworthy thoughts, that God will do nothing for them, because he has destin'd their eternal state. Imaginations of this sort, false as they are, will put an infallible stop to their progress in

virtue:

* Rom. ch. ix. ver. 25.

† Heb. ch. iv. ver. 16.

| ‡ Jam. ch. ii. ver. 10.

virtue: they must therefore leave all these things to the disposal of that God, whose most beloved attribute is to shew mercy to his creatures: for his property is always to have mercy, and whenever we endeavour to do what we can, he will accept us: they should not let all the passages of scripture, denounced only against the most obdurate and hardened sinners, terrify and affright them, but should look on the merciful side of God's word, lest it should please him to take from them the transport and joy, which the possession of their souls in patience would otherwise give them§.

Thus have I answered, as fully as I am able, all those objections, and, I hope, prov'd them very weak, inconsistent with the goodness of God, and greatly detrimental both to the souls and bodies of whoever entertains them: all that remains is for me to make a suitable application of this doctrine. And,

First, let us by seeing the mercies and threatenings of God, be excited to follow our Saviour's perfect pattern, as far as we are able, and endeavour to walk in that happy medium, which will keep us from presuming too much upon, or being too diffident of God's mercies. Let us not suffer ourselves to cast off our care for eternity, either by too great hopes, or too desponding fears, so as to induce us to imagine ourselves of that unhappy number, whom our vain imagination paints to us as doomed, from their creation, to be eternally undone; which I have shewn impossible to be agreeable to, or consistent with the mercy

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§ Luke, chap. xxi. ver. 19.



and goodness, nay, or even with the severity of God, because even that is justice.

2. Secondly, let us (from the consideration of our weakness) be imploring often the divine assistance; for as in our natural state, if he withdraw our breath, we die, and turn again to our dust*. So in our spiritual warfare, if he affords us not the grace of his spirit to guide us, we shall be very much wanting in our virtuous acquisitions; and therefore it is very proper, what we so much want, we should strenuously sue to him for, that so we may be enabled to continue stedfast in well doing, that we may go gradually on in our Christian course; may add to our faith patience, to patience experience, and to that hope, even such a hope as worketh by love, such a hope as maketh not ashamed†.

3. Thirdly, let us be found always humble suppliants at the Lord's table, that we may thereby be made spiritually partakers of that body, which our redeemer suffered to be pierced and nailed to the cross for us: that we may have our souls (as it were) wash'd in his most precious blood; that this may be a means of improving all our faculties, removing all our weak and imperfect notions of God, and of encouraging our hope in a blessed immortality, by reflecting that that God, who thus gave his Son, (his only begotten, eternal, well-beloved Son, that Son in whom he was pleased‡) as a sacrifice for us all, will also with him freely give us all things, and

* Psalm civ. ver. 29.

† Rom. ch. v. ver. 4, 5.

‡ Rom. ch. viii. ver. 32.

and in him and through him reconcile the world unto himself.

4. Fourthly, let the consideration of God's mercies make us cry out with St. Paul, O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out*! and again with the Psalmist. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me: bless his holy name†. Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thine infirmities: who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.

5. Fifthly, let the consideration of God's mercy, and the persuasion of the error of the doctrine of predestination make us always avoid the abettors of it, (any further than for their instruction, and to convince them of, and bring them off from their errors) let us otherwise shun them as the enemies of our peace and of our souls, as the affronters of God, and of the number of those, on whom the dregs of his fury, and the vials of his wrath will be poured out‡; whilst on the other hand, we should be led to pity and assist the weak and honest mind, with all the most prevailing arguments we can fetch from the unerring word of God himself, who has therein given us the greatest promises of reward to our endeavours, as well as threatened our wilful and continued disobedience of his laws with the severest punishments.

Now

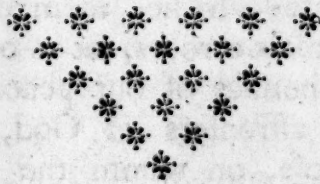
§ 2 Cor. v. ver. 18.

* Rom. ch. xi. ver. 33.

† Psalm ciii. ver. 1, 4.

‡ Rev. ch. xvi. ver. 1.

Now to him that washed us in his blood, to him that loved us, and died that we might live: to him who became an high-priest to intercede for us before his father, and who rose from the dead to assure us of a blessed resurrection: to him with the Eternal Father, and the Holy Ghost, three persons, tho' but one eternal God, be ascribed, as is most due, all possible thanks, adoration, and praise, now and for evermore. Amen.



Sermon

Sermon IX.

Man's misery consequent on his own actions.

Wisdom of Solomon, ch. i. ver. 13, 14.

For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living.

For he created all things that they might have their being, and the generations of the world were healthful; and there is no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of death upon the earth.

IN the verse before my text, the inspired writer of the book of wisdom, speaking as it were to all the sons of men, bids them not seek death in the error of their ways, nor bring upon themselves destruction, and seems to intimate in the text, that our destruction must be of ourselves, if it happens unto us; telling us, that God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living, and so on, which may be understood, both with regard to temporal and eternal death: from which words, I shall consider these several very evident truths.

I. First,

I. First, That God made not death, but so far from it; that,

II. Secondly, He is grieved at the destruction of the living.

III. Thirdly, I shall offer some reasons, why he should take no pleasure in the destruction of the living; namely, because he made all things, that they might have their being, and in order to the continuance of it might be happy. I shall endeavour to prove,

IV. Fourthly, that the generations of the world, whether animal or vegetable, were at their first formation or coming into the world healthful

V. Fifthly, I shall shew, as well as I am able, that the kingdom of death was not upon the earth, nor any poison of destruction throughout the whole creation.

I. First then, I am to prove the truth of that proposition, God made not death. In the account which Moses gives us of the creation of the world, we may observe, that in order to make it entirely perfect, even infinite wisdom itself seems as it were to consider, how he should form it. And tho' it is not to be doubted, but he could have willed it into being all at once by his omnipotent fiat, yet in condescension to our conceptions of things, he seems to go gradually on in these his works of wonder; and first of all he form'd the heaven and the earth, then the light, and so on: not in the least to induce us to suppose, that he who form'd the light could want any assistance from it: no! it was most certainly done for our use

use and benefit: for to him all things were naked: the invisible things which were from the beginning, even that amazing mass of matter, which in after-times was form'd into convenient and useful frames and modes, for our existence and happiness, by the determination of his glorious wisdom and goodness; I say, all these things were equally as well known to him from all eternity, as they were after the creation of light: for to him the day and night are both alike, and always were so: and if we could so stretch our narrow and finite understandings, as that they should only for a moment enter into the secret workings of the Almighty, we should be able to see most convincing proofs, that he made not death, yea, and our very reason, short-sighted as it is, gives us great assurance to the contrary; for instance were we to deviate so far from the glory or greatness of God's power, as to suppose that he required time and reflection as we do, before he could act; yet how should we be swallow'd up in the contemplation of his glorious goodness, when we see the result of such deliberations, and how much they are to us ward, and for our benefit. We shall upon a proper examination see, that such a frame of nature, as Omnipotence displays to us, could be the result of nothing but of infinite goodness and infinite wisdom also; and if it be the result of infinite wisdom, that cannot be inconsistent with itself, then the emanation of his goodness appearing so plain, in that plentiful provision he has made for every part of the creation, must necessarily convince us, that God made not death, but created all things, in their several

natures and degrees perfect, especially man, whom doubtless he formed capable (without passing through the gate of death) of having been made partaker of that heavenly paradise, which is the seat of God, or at least as near it, as it was proper for him to be admitted to, had he not by the error of his ways, and by the abuse of his permitted liberty, brought upon himself destruction and death, at which God is said to be grieved, as I shall shew under the next consideration offer'd to us from the text.

II. Secondly, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living. As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies*; but to resume the other part of the argument, that the creation was an effect of God's goodness as well as his wisdom: can it be thought that God Almighty should take pleasure in creating man, and at the same time make him in such a manner, as should of itself be as it were a seed-plot for his destruction? whilst on the other hand I would observe, that a possibility of a lapse, which must be existing in a state of liberty, is no way injurious either to the wisdom or to the goodness of God: and yet the consequent effect of such a lapse must be punishment upon the delinquent, and that could not be executed on a being, consisting of partly flesh and partly spirit, if it did not reach to both natures: and consequently the death of the natural man was the only, or at least most proper way to punish offending man, being in itself most consistent with both his natures, and

* Ezek. ch. xxxiii. ver. 7.

and the nature, wisdom and goodness of God. But to proceed, it is a proverbial saying among us, that love descends, and does not ascend; intimating thereby that great affection, which we may see run downward, through the whole creation, from the parent to the child, the dam to its young, and so on: and in consequence, as we allow this disposition in us to our children to be a wonderful mystery in, as well as proof of the superintendency of providence; how can we but suppose that he who implanted such an instinct in our animal nature, for the preservation of our species, (as cannot be dispens'd with without giving pain to ourselves) must in the rational life consider himself as our father, and be as anxious (if I may so speak) to have kept us in our originally perfect life, as we are to keep our offspring. For so St. Paul tells us, ye are the offspring of God.

2dly. We are more especially induced to cherish our own species, tho' the merciful man is merciful to his beast: and as man was made originally in the likeness of God in his diviner part; so he will be and most certainly is very solicitous for the life of our immortal part, in which our likeness of him consists. And this comparison, I am allow'd to make, from the glorious declarations he has made of himself, both in the Old and New Testament. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee, says God by his prophet Isaiah. And in the New Testament; if you, says our Saviour, know

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how

† Acts xvii. ver. 28.

§ Isa. xlix. ver. 15.

how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give his holy spirit (that best of gifts) unto them that ask him*? From all which it most certainly and evidently appears, that God hath no pleasure in the death or destruction of the living. In answer to that general question, that if God made not death, how came it to be, or who did? I answer, that men brought destruction upon themselves by the works of their own hands: that lust, when it was conceived, brought forth sin, and sin death; and that it was never (as far as we can judge of it) intended in the divine mind. But there are some other objections, which (from a superficial view, how many ways the executive justice, or, if I may so speak, the cruel dispensation of Providence acts in the world) may be started; and they seem chiefly to be these; war, pestilence, and animal poison; all of which, I fear not, with God's assisting grace, fully to answer and to justify, by proving the third proposition in my text, viz.

III. Thirdly, that he created all things that they might have their being; and,

I. First, it may be objected, that the desolations of war are of such a nature as seem to impeach the justice or goodness of God. To which I answer, that in consequence of the fatal fall, all nature received such a shock, as to render it incapable of performing its operations properly and agreeably to the first design of its creator. Man was (as we are told) originally created like

God,

* Matt. vii. ver. 11.

† James i. ver. 15.

God. In the likeness of God created he him*, in all the essential perfections of his nature, with this difference only, that he was plac'd in an organiz'd body, by the means of which he had room to exercise those faculties and virtues, which were necessary, in this probational state, to his acceptance, and to render him well pleasing to his creator, and at the same time with such liberty of action, as must make his acts his own. And I am confident, had it been otherwise, there would have been more reason to have cavilled at a determin'd form of existence, or kind of forc'd being, than there can be now, since we are left at our liberty to act as we will.

I am not willing to enter into that trite worn-out argument, of the preference of non-existence to free-will, or to confute those, who I am sure (only from self-conviction of wrong actions) have wish'd, that all their actions had been determin'd at the first, and that no liberty had been at all allowed them, and all this in order only to their own exculpation: I say, I will wave all this, (on which much might be said, in regard to our receiving rewards or punishments, according to our good or bad actions) and will consider things only as we find them. We see man was created perfect at first, and that he is not so now, and consequently must have fell from his original nature, and greatly deviated from his first perfection, imbib'd principles of pride and vain-glory, and an insatiate thirst after terrene enjoyments, from which vices it is that wars arise: whence come wars and tumults amongst you†, says

* Gen. i. ver. 27.

† James iv. ver. 1.

says the apostle, are they not from hence, even from your lusts? And as a subordination of men and things is requisite, in order to the preserving the oeconomy of nature, so there must be superior and inferior powers, in order to carry on the rational frame and management of communicative affairs, of which war is a species. And as from the tendency of means to their end, and causes to their effects, in the natural life, the greater bodies press upon the less, until they bring them into a subserviency to them; so in the rational world, those in a high sphere rule and govern those in an inferior one: from whence I would infer, that it is a natural consequence of that powerful and permitted vice which reigns in the world, that the ambition of princes should force their subjects into desolative wars, as naturally as the heavy bodies press upon the less, in the gravitated laws of the inanimate creation; only with this difference, that in the latter their properties are forc'd and destin'd, but in the rational they are left at liberty, any otherwise than from that vitiated force, which sin gave them from their first fall.

This doctrine seems agreeable to scripture and right reason, and does most evidently prove, that it is from the vices of man, and not from the decreative power of God, that wars and their dire consequences come; and, at the same time, offers us a reason why God should be griev'd at the destruction of the living, because it is the effect of vice, and at the same time gives us a tacit proof that he made all things, that they might have their being.

In

In regard to those wars, which the scriptures tell us were entered into by the immediate command of God himself, during the Jewish theocracy, I would observe, that they were only as punishments on the rebellious and idolatrous nations of the world, and not a destin'd destruction of them; before they so greatly finn'd in falling off from God: and consequently in that too, it was their own crimes, and not God (that in this case made death). For throughout the whole, he plainly shews, that he was griev'd at their offences, and that he is always willing to save an unrighteous people, so far as is consistent with his justice and the honour of his laws; for proof of which, numberless instances might be brought, but especially the cities of Nineveh and Sodom: the last of which he was so inclined to spare, that he would not have destroy'd it, had he found five righteous in it. And sure, to execute judgment on such a nation as this can no way impeach the goodness of God, or give the least ground to think he did not create them, that they might have and enjoy their being. Nay, so far did he carry his tenderness to this city, so unwilling was he to destroy it, that he even scruples his own omniscience, and says, I will go down now and see, whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me, and if not I will know*. I would likewise observe, that there is a prodigious difference between wars offensive and defensive: for from the same principles which God acted by, in representing himself as griev'd at the destruction of the

* Gen. ch. xix. ver. 21.

the living, it was that he implanted in us that universal law of self-preservation, and hereby also gave us another proof, that he made all things, that they might have their being. I come now,

IV. Fourthly, to prove that assertion in the text, that the generations of the world (whether animal or vegetable) at their first creation were healthful. And herein I shall consider the second objection made against the goodness of our beneficent creator, from his permitting pestilential and animal poisons to do so much harm. And here it will appear plain, that man, by the error of his ways, brought death upon himself. A remarkable instance of this we have

1. In Turkey, where, tho' it must be granted that nature itself tends a good deal to render the plague destructive, yet the laziness and superstition of its inhabitants contribute thereto much more, who will rather run into than fly from the distemper: and it is notorious, that where proper care has been taken, those even who were not natives, and consequently might be more liable to danger of death from the infection, have escaped, whilst the Turks themselves have died.

2. At the time when the plague reign'd here in England, it was in a great measure spread by the imprudence of the workmen, or covetousness of the proprietors, placing the houses so contiguous, and making the streets so narrow, that they had not so sufficient a provision for cleanliness as was necessary, and so in some measure impeded the elasticity of the air from having its proper force.

force. Thus not only vice and superstition, but negligence and imprudence also greatly contributed to sharpen the arrows even of death itself.

3. Another consideration may be also taken from the garden of Eden, which perhaps is only a name for the whole earth. We may observe that it was declar'd to be made perfect, for God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good†, and that upon the fall, and not till then, it was render'd liable to tillage on account of its more undigested and spontaneous productions: weeds, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth: observe the words SHALL IT speak of henceforward, which includes in it a supposition, that it had not done so before. And of these we may be able by and by to give some rational account, and shew how it came to pass in a natural way that the earth should be thus productive of weeds, after the shock which nature suffered from the curse of the Almighty upon the fall. But before I do that, I would make an observation in proof, that God made all things that they might be healthful, which is (namely) this, that upon a chymical inquiry, we find there is no herb or weed, but affords (when properly apply'd) much benefit to the health of our bodies;* and tho' perhaps, we might have been

C c able

† Gen. chap. i.

* Plantarum usus latissime patet, et in omni vitæ parte occurrit. Sine illis laute, sine illis commode non vivitur, at nec vivitur omnino: quæcunque ad victum necessaria sunt, quæcunque ad delicias faciunt, e locupletissimo suo penu abunde subministrant.

Quanto ex iis mensa innocentior; mundior, salubrior quam ex animalium cæde et lavien? Homo certe natura animalium carnivorum non est; nullis ad prædam et rapinam armis instructum, non dentibus exertis et serratis, non unguibus aduncis. Manus ad fructus colligendos, dentes ad mandendos

able to have made use of them in a less laborious way, had there been no degeneracy in our or their natures by the fall; yet it must be allow'd that they were at first made healthful, and fit for our use, and it is sure no hard matter, thus to eat bread in the sweat of our brows, when we had so highly offended; especially if the pleasures of the botanist, those pleasures which inquisitive searchings into naturals give to the reasoning mind, accompanied with our own industrious labours, which will enable us to render those very weeds serviceable to us, be taken into consideration.

4. Again, fourthly, another proof that God made all things that they might be healthful, or (which is much the same) that they might by our care

mandendos comparati. Non legimus ei ante diluvium carnes ad esum concessas. At non victum tantum nobis suppeditant, sed et vestitum, et medicinam et domicilia aliaq; ædificia, et navigia, et supellectilem, et focum, et oblectamenta sensuum animique. Ex his naribus odoramenta et fuffumigia parantur. Horum floris inenarrabili colorum, et schematum varietate, et elegantia, oculos exhilarant, suavissima odorum quos expirant fragrantia spiritus recreant. Horum fructus gulæ illecebræ mensas secundas instruunt, et languentem appetitum excitant. Taces virorem amænissimum oculis amicum, quem per prata, pascua, agros, sylvas spatiantibus obijciunt, et umbras quas contra æstum et solis ardores præbent. — Ray's Plin. Nat. Hist. l. i. c. 24, p. 46.

Pro doloribus quibuscunque sedandis præstantissimi semper usus opium habetur; quamobrem merito *Nepenthe* appellari solet, et remedium vere divinum existit. Et quidem satis mirari vix possumus, quomodo urgente visceris aut membri cujuscumque tortura insigni, et intolerabili cruciatus, pharmacum hoc, incantamenti instar, levamen et *analgesian* subitam, immo interdum absque somno, aut saltem prius quam adveniret, concedit. Porro adhuc magis stupendum est, quod donec particula opiatice operari, et potentiam suam narcoticam exercere continuant immo etiam aliquamdiu postquam somnus finitur, summa alleviatio, et indolentia in parte affecta persistit. — Willis Phar. Rat. par. i. s. 7, cap. i. sect. 15.

care and endeavours be rendered so, is taken from the consideration of the objection made against those venomous animals we meet with, which nevertheless, I doubt not, are made very subservient to our use, on account of their exhaling or imbibing those particles of poison from the earth, air, &c. which were they not to do would soon destroy the tender texture of our fibrous nature: and most of all, may we be led to acknowledge the assertion in the text, when we consider, that the flesh and bodies of some of the most envenomed kind may, and are also, by proper application, rendered preservatives, instead of being destructive to our animal frame, and that the most virulent poisonous plants may, by a proper degree, be render'd serviceable instead of pernicious to us, as we daily see to be the case, in our medicinal applications of them*. I would alledge further, that the very venom itself is render'd useful, as an antidote to itself, as a learned author informs us†, he found upon experience in a person, who having been bit by a rattle snake, immediately sucked the wound,

C c 2

and

* Specus seu caverna (vulgo La Grotta del Serpi) duorum hominum capax, fistulosis quibusdam foraminibus in formam cribri perforata cernitur, ex quibus ingens quedam, principio veris, diversicolorum serpentum, nulla tamen, ut dicitur, singulari veneni qualitate imbutorum progenies quotannis pullulare solet. In hac spelunca elephantiacos, leprosos, paralyticos, arthriticos, podagricos, &c. nudos exponere solent, qui mox halituum subterraneorum calore in sudorem resoluti,

serpentum propullulantium, totum corpus infirmi implicantium, fluctu linctuq; ita omni vitioso virulentoq; humore priore dicuntur, ut repetito hoc per aliquod tempus medicamento, tandem perfecta sanitati restituantur.—Kitcher's Museum Worm. l. iii. c. 9.

† Mead on Poisons, page 23 and 25.

Noxia serpentum est admisso sanguine pestis,

Morsu virus habent et fatum dente minantur,

Pocula morte carent.

and extracting the groſſer particles of the poiſon, the remainder prov'd a proper emetic (being mix'd with the ſalival juice) ſufficient for his cure; whereby it moſt evidently appears, that God made all things that they might be healthful.

In regard to peſtilential poiſons, I own, it ſeems extremely difficult to reconcile that to our comprehenſions of things: but yet I ſhall endeavour to do it, as well as I am able, ſo as to make the truth of God appear in the ſeveral poſitions of the text. And firſt, it may be ſuppos'd that at the general ſhock, which all nature ſuffer'd from the fall; the frame of the world was alter'd, and in conſequence of this, that the air had not the ſame elasticity, or the ſun the ſame bearings in it's influencing warmth, in regard to the earth, which they were originally deſign'd to have; from whence it follows, that there muſt be a ſort of partial and unequal effects; and that thoſe parts of matter, whether fluid or ſolid, which either had too much, or wanted of this enlivening nourishing effect, might, as it were, be rendered rank and ſouriſh, and liable to putrefaction; and that in conſequence, the exhalations which were made by the ſun, would be affected by them; and it would from thence naturally follow, that our conſtitutions might by their poignancy or volatility have their fluids vitiated, and their operations in ſome meaſure impeded. And, ſecondly, that they might by a continual exerciſe of this ſort, be by degrees, render'd friable and brittle, and very ſubject to decay: and the truth of this we every day experience, by the infinite number of diſtempers, which prevail, and carry ſo many off.

5. Another

5. Another argument in favour of this is, the great difference, in the present age of man; and that of the antediluvians; which most certainly comes, as I apprehend, from the matter of all things, growing worse and worse, in consequence of the curse continued; whereby it has one age after another a more dreadful effect upon our natures: and this is also much increased by our own intemperance, by which, multitudes are so very suddenly carried off. Yet notwithstanding all this, it does not hinder, but that the Almighty made all things originally salutary, and that every thing would have so continued, had not sin enter'd into the world, and death by sin. This also may serve to illustrate,

V. The fifth and last proof I would offer from the words of the text; namely, that there is no poison of destruction in them, and that the kingdom of death is not upon the earth. Of this, let it be observed, farther, that the poison and the antidote generally grow together, and that even the animal that is injur'd by the bite or sting of another, immediately by the laws of it's nature or instinct, directly runs to some specific antidote for a cure*. And is it not to be wonder'd

* Vegetables afford not only food to irrationals, but also physic, if it be true what Aristotle saith, and after him Pliny; which latter in his 8th book, chap. 27, specifies divers plants made use of as specifics, by divers, both beasts and birds; as dittany by wounded deer, calandine by swallows, to cure the eyes of

their young, &c. And if the reader has a mind to see more instances of this nature, he may consult Merfenne in Gen. p. 933.

Tales plantarum species in quacunque regione a Deo creatur quales hominibus et animalibus ibidem natis maxime conveniunt; imo ex plantarum nascentium frequentia se fere animadvertere

wonder'd at, that as we breath the same air, and eat the productions of the same earth, as the animals do, we should also like them imbibe venomous secretions, and by degrees have our bodily tabernacles render'd brittle, friable and dissoluble in their texture, which would consequently be liable to fall into the original dust, from which they at first were taken; and yet against these evils we have in a great measure an antidote placed in us, I mean our reason, which properly exerted, furnishes us with a great capacity of overcoming them, and preserving our lives, much longer, than an unwatchful conduct of our selves would produce. For first, the quickness of our apprehensions helps us, very often to avoid these evils. And secondly, our physical knowledge leads us most generally to a cure: thus it is plain, that tho' death reigns in our mortal bodies, yet it cannot so far set up it's kingdom here, as to take away the assertion of the wise man, namely, that the kingdom of death is not upon the earth: thus I have gone through what I at first propos'd, and hope, I have so far explain'd the words contain'd in it, as will (to every well disposed mind,) entirely vindicate both the goodness and severity of God, in the ways of his providence, the works of his creation, and the permitted evil, that is in the world; and have shewn, that tho' death is now the lot of every one of us; yet it was originally, brought upon us, by the errour of our first parents; that God created all things at first perfect,

vertere posse quibus morbis (EN-
DEMIS) qualibet regio subjecta
sit, scribit Solenander. Sic apud
Danos, Frisos, Hollandos, qui-

bus, scorbutus frequens, Coch-
learia copiose provenit. Ray Hist.
Pl. lib. xvi. cap. 3.

as c
orig

fect, with a design, they should have and enjoy their beings; and in consequence furnish'd them with every requisite to that great design, for it is possible, man might never have pass'd through death to life had not Adam sinned. All that now remains is to make some reflexions upon what has been said. And

1. First, it appears plain, that we do most evidently consist of two natures, the one only serviceable to the other, by means of their intimate union: the one capable of existing to all eternity; the other liable (from the original sin of our first parents) to perish; and consequently we may hence learn that we should take the greatest care of our immortal part, the soul; and endeavour so to temper that, by the virtues of a good life, that we may not by the error of our ways, bring upon our selves destruction, but on the contrary, may by the grand specific, and truest antidote (religion and virtue) be able to counterbalance the poison of sin; and by persevering in a good course to the end of our days, may rob death of it's sting, and be render'd capable of receiving an eternal reward and everlasting happiness, in the world to come, from that God, who made not death.

2. Secondly, let us consider, that as it is manifest God made not death, and that yet it happens; it must of consequence be, that by the works of our own hands, we pull destruction on our selves: and hence we should learn to avoid all sin, which will now (if wilfully persisted in) as certainly consign us over to death eternal, as original sin brought a temporal death on our first parents,

parents, and of course on us; which we may assure our selves, was not originally design'd by our Creator.

3. Thirdly, let us be often employ'd in divine contemplations, and consider the works and ways of God Almighty, not with a sceptical view or intention to find faults in the distributions of his providence, but with such a devout intention of soul, that may, as it were, prove an alembic, whereby to extract such mysteries of wonder, as may establish our faith, and induce us to adore and praise our Creator, Preserver, and continual Benefactor: and we may be assur'd, that the more we employ our selves in these meditations, the more we shall descry that glorious subordination of causes and effects, which we daily see, the one consequent upon the other, and be thence necessarily led to acknowledge, that all the ways of God are perfect, that he is infinitely wise and good, and that from these attributes it is, we are kept in being, even for one moment. Then shall we readily join in the song of the angels in the Revelations, and say, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints*.

4. Fourthly, let us from the observation of the frames of our bodies, and the manner of our existence, reflect how very near flesh and spirit are, even in our own formation, which we may receive proof of from the disposition of our parts, and the organization of the whole: and tho' we cannot adequately account for it, yet we may consider it as a confirmation of our faith in the
Godhead

* Rev. chap. xv. ver. 3.

Godhead and incarnation of Jesus Christ, the method of which wonder we cannot know; for if we who are very imperfect, can and do as to our souls, arrive so near to the divine likeness, how much more may we conceive him (who was the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person†,) to be God as well as man, and to be man in such a manner, as man would have been, had he not fell from his original nature, that is with a body, not subject to corruption.

5. And here again fifthly, above all, we have a most wonderful antidote against the destructive poison and malignant nature of sin. And happily for us here we see, that as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive‡, that Christ by the enlivening balsam of his innocent blood, being render'd satisfactory by the perfection of his divine nature, heals all the wounds made in us by sin: his perfect atonement induces God the Father to love us truly, and through him and his satisfaction to instate us, in that bliss which we through sin had forfeited, and to release us from that destruction, which by the error of our own ways, we should otherwise have receiv'd, and yet must own, we brought upon ourselves.

6. Sixthly, from a view of the wise subordination of all things, animate and inanimate, and the proper disposition of them; let us observe, how exactly they quadrate with the designs of their Creator; and thereby learn a lesson of contentment and resignation to God's will, and endeavour always to act to the best of our power, in that state of life, to which it shall please God

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† Heb. i. ver. 3.

‡ 1 epist. Cor. xv. ver. 22.

to call us, lest by a contrary practice, we become at last useless and fit for nothing, but (as stubble) to be thrown into the furnace of destruction: let not the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, or any other part of the creation shame us, whilst they all act agreeable to the law of their natures, and we continue neglectful of our duties; but on the contrary, let the whole creation serve us as a volume, wherein to study the best and most suitable way to worship our creator: let not the rich, and great, by the weight of their power oppress those below them, nor the poor or middling station'd person, aspire after the achievements of the great, but follow nature-over-ruled by grace, and believe that destination must be the best, which (to us) is the allotment of infinite wisdom.

Now to that God, who orders all things by the council of his unerring wisdom; to that Son who reinstated us in a possibility of eternal life, after our fall; and to that holy Spirit whose influencing grace leads us on to virtue and bliss: to him who loved us, and declared he would not the death of a sinner: to Father Son and Holy Ghost, three persons and one eternal God, be all honour and glory, adoration and praise, now and for ever.
Amen.

Sermon X.

The goodness and power of God demonstrably striking in all nature, and more immediately by earthquakes, and some strange phenomena.

Hosea, chap. xi. ver. 9.

I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man.

THIS chapter represents to us, as does indeed the whole prophecy, the great degeneracy of the Israelites, and their ingratitude to God after many repeated mercies and favours conferr'd by him upon them; even whilst they continued a murmuring and disobedient people. It also represents to us, most pathetically, the struggle which the Almighty and merciful God had with himself, before he could bring himself to destroy this his once favourite people, by bringing upon them such judgments as their sins deserv'd: and how moving is the argument he makes use of for this purpose: how shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Ad-

maah? How shall I set thee as Zebolim*? under which two names are signified the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were made examples of God's wrath against a sinful people: we may observe further, how soft and natural, how tender and affecting, those expressions are in the latter part of the verse above cited; mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. And after this reluctant struggle, these melting and compassionate expressions of his goodness, God Almighty suffers not his judgments to take place, but at last resolves in the verse from which my text is taken, that he will not execute the fierceness of his anger, neither will he return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God (says he) and not man: from which words, several things are to be learn'd, especially at this time, for our improvement and advantage, and which I shall consider as so many heads of this discourse. And,

I. First, I shall endeavour to give as well as I am able, an explanation of the words, I am God, and not man.

II. Secondly, shall shew from the context, how exceedingly disagreeable to the Almighty it is, for us to be from time to time receiving mercies and favours from him, and yet still continuing insensible of, or ungrateful to him for them.

III. Thirdly, prove that tho' the punishment due to our crimes be respited or rebated, yet that (as they are always due) they may be executed

executed at a time, when we think not of it; unless the Almighty, in consideration of his being God and not man, should take a resolution in our favour, and not execute upon us the fierceness of his anger. And,

IV. Fourthly, I shall make some reflections on the words thus explain'd.

L. First then, I am to give an explanation of the words, I am God, and not man. And here, whether we consider that ineffable name of God, whereby he order'd his servant Moses to stile him, I AM THAT I AM*; or whether we take a view of him in the works of his creation and providence; we shall in all circumstances find him without an equal, and may justly cry out with his prophet Isaiah? to whom will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him†? It is very observable, how frequently, (not only in the text, but in several other parallel passages of scripture) the Almighty chuses to shew he is God, and not man, in an especial manner, by exerting his most darling attribute mercy, which prompts him to forego his anger, and not destroy delinquents in an instant. It would have been a terrible conviction indeed of his being God and not man; if, as soon as man became rebellious, he had only said, I will destroy him, and had subjoin'd this arbitrary reason for it, that he was God omnipotent, and not frail man: but this is not the case: he is a merciful God, and not a revengeful man, and thus describes himself, (as it were

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* Exod. iii. ver. 14.

† Isaiah xl. ver. 18.

on purpose, to induce us to love, as well as fear him) that in consequence of his goodness, he makes a resolution, not to destroy the works of his own hands, because that his bowels yearned on them. I am sensible it would take up volumes, instead of a single discourse; should I attempt, in ever so cursory a manner, to enter into a detail of those many ways, in which God Almighty proves himself to be God, and not man: for whether we consider the heavens above, which are the works of his hands, the moon and stars, which he has made, or view the traces of his divine power, in the animal, vegetable, mineral, or rational creation; in either of these pursuits, we shall be swallowed up in a sea of contemplation; and so far from being able to fathom or explore them, that we must humbly own, such knowledge is too high for us, we cannot attain unto it†. We should from a devout and serious reflexion, on the things which are made, be led to quit and to abandon every rising thought of infidelity, and rest fully convinc'd, that these emanations of omnipotence, can only be the productions of him, who made made all things out of nothing, or at least gave the first exertive faculty to inert matter, who alone is infinite in all perfections, and who by being so, must needs be God, not man: but on a supposition we could do all this, and granting it were possible for us, to trace the ways, how the Almighty acts, in these his works of creation; yet how should we be puzzled to find out the amazing mystery of God manifested

† Psalm cxxxix. ver. 6.

manifested in the flesh, to destroy the works of the devils? where should we find a salvo for original sins? where a mediator for complicated guilt, but in him, who represents himself, as yearning on his laps'd creatures? how vainly should we try to reconcile perfect God, and sinful man? where find a satisfaction and atonement, which should prove sufficiently expiatory to wash away the guilt of sin? where would our erring reason stray, in search of that unbounded happiness, which was a mystery so profound, that even angels were desirous to pry into it, had it not been pointed out to us, in that unerring mirror, God's eternal word of truth? who is not man that he should not lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent*. Thus he transcendently appears from this very imperfect survey of him in all his works, but especially the plan of our redemption, and in the numerous deliverances which he has wrought out for us, to be God, and not man. And if God so loves his creatures, we should learn from hence,

II. Secondly, how disagreeable it is to Almighty God, for us to be continually receiving benefits and mercies from him, yet never offering up to him any return, or grateful acknowledgments of praise and of thanksgiving; but often on the contrary, continuing insensible of all his favours. A proof of this we have in the cure wrought by our Saviour, on ten lepers whom he cleans'd and healed; yet finding only one amongst them, re-
turning

§ 1 ep. John iii. ver. 8.

* Numb. xxiii. ver. 19.

turning with a sense of gratitude to own the miracle, he says, lo! were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine*? and would we but reflect a little, we soon might find within ourselves, a backwardness to heap accumulated favours, on such who look upon them as their due, and receive them in such a manner from us, as to leave us in uncertainty, whether they are sensible of them, or take them, as intended, for a furtherance of their happiness, and singular advantage. We are (I say) apt to grow cool and disregardless of these vile ingrates, are ready to withdraw our free communicative hands, and at sometimes to let them see, and even feel the weight of our resentment. And if we, who are not only by our nature fellow-creatures, but more intimately like each other in the degeneracy of our minds, can so resent their base ungenerous treatment; how much more, might that most perfect being who is continually giving us good things to enjoy, be offended at our ingratitude and most unsuitable returns to him for all his benefits? were it not, that he is great in goodness as in power, delights in mercy, and is God, not man? and this will more especially appear, when we consider the distance between the creature and his creator, and the greatness of those blessings we receive from him, compar'd with those, which we can possibly bestow on one another: the necessities of our natures (whether in regard to the mind or body, consider'd jointly or abstracted, render a mutual assistance necessary to the conservation of that community, to which we severally belong: and therefore

* Luke xvii. ver. 17.

therefore the performance of this duty may proceed as much from self interest, as from a benevolence of temper or disposition in us; for in the body politic, no more (than in the natural) can any member say unto another, I have no need of thee†: in as much as whilst the exigences of the poor, loudly bespeak the charitable kind regards of those whom providence has plac'd in a more elevated rank of life, these on the other hand, who are of nobler birth, and a more affluent fortune, stand no less in need of the industrious labours of the poor: so that in every station of life, there is a most apparent and reciprocal dependence, but with the Almighty it is not so: we are indeed continually dependent upon him, for every thing we want, or hope for, or enjoy, and that so absolutely too, that if he withdraw our breath, we die, and turn again to dust: if he is angry, all our days are gone, and we bring our years to an end, as a tale that is told*; but he is ever gloriously great in himself, and can admit of no addition to his greatness, by any homage we can pay him, or any thing that we can do: our righteousness cannot profit him§, tho' it may be serviceable to a man like our selves: if he is hungry he will not tell us, for all the beasts of the forest are his, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills†: there seems to be throughout the sacred writings a particular mark of odium set on this sin of ingratitude, and yet where it is mentioned, the great and good God seems in some measure to extenuate the crime, and to draw up himself

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† 1 epist. Cor. xii. ver. 21.

* Psalm civ. ver. 29.

§ Job xxxv. ver. 7, 8.

† Psalm l. ver. 10, 12.

a kind of plea for the offenders: for instance, when God by the prophet makes a lamentation over Judah for their unnatural rebellion, telling them, they will revolt more and more, and piteously expostulating with them says, why will ye be stricken any more†? even then he seems to subjoin an excuse for them, in that pathetic clause, the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint; which may be understood of the frailty of man's nature in general, and of that easiness with which he is seduc'd by every slight temptation: and when the perfection of the old testament was made manifest in Jesus Christ; we there also find him, who was God incarnate, in the same manner mourning over the remaining Jews, even as by his prophet, God does here: for says our saviour, Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee*, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! and in consequence of this their ingratitude, he tells them†, that now their house is left desolate; whereby we may observe, that as this ingratitude of theirs resembled that of their forefathers, and they still remain'd unmov'd by the many wonders God had wrought for them and amongst them, so the punishment inflicted on them was, to be depriv'd both of their state and government: which brings me naturally to shew, what I propos'd,

III. Thirdly,

† Isa. i. ver. 5. * Matt. xxiii. ver. 37. † Ver. 38.

III. Thirdly, that tho' the punishment due to our crimes may thro' God's patience and forbearance, be put off for a while, and he may only at present slightly shake his rod over us, as by earthquakes, which are not as yet permitted to do us any considerable harm; yet it may be executed at a time when we are not aware: a lively instance of which awful and avenging power, we have lately had transmitted to us, by an account of that amazing earthquake, which has swallow'd up one of the greatest and most opulent cities on the Spanish main, and tho' we are not allow'd to judge from hence, that the inhabitants thereof were sinners above the rest of mankind, or even greater offenders than ourselves, (unless we could have any divine testimony to warrant us in such a judgment) yet we may learn from hence, (in as much as they are examples for us) how much it is our indispensable duty, so to endeavour the improvement of our time and faculties, and every other blessing we enjoy, to the glory of God, and the good of our fellow creatures, that whether he come in the small still voice of interior and convictive motions on our minds, or in the thunder or the earthquake; whether he visit us by the slower progress of a sick bed, or snatch us away by an instantaneous destruction, we may be always ready to meet our Lord*; and never think that we are safe, or hugg ourselves in our crimes, merely because judgement against us is not executed speedily†: more especially as it seldom happens to be the case, unless it be as a public judgment on a

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body

* 1 Thess. chap. iv. ver. 17. † Eccles. chap. viii. ver. 11.

body or people: but let us all strive so to live before him, in holiness and righteousness all our days, with a proper apprehension of his power; that we may be met with by him in mercy and not in anger, when he shall come in his most exalted character of God and judge, to shake terribly the earth†.

This great and terrible event, in an especial manner, as of late it as been felt at home, affords us also another recent proof, that the Lord is God, and not man: for there is none that can besides him thus shake terribly the earth; there is no one has an arm like him, nor is there any one can thunder with a voice like him§: by this great event (as well as by the common course of his providence) it is plain, there is none like him in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath; who visiteth in mercy, or punisheth in judgement, just as he sees fit.

Again, he hath shew'd himself also particularly to be God and not man, by defeating hereby the projects of our enemies, making their devices of none effect†, and destroying the counsels of their princes: he is the God of order, and not of confusion, and has therefore look'd down upon us in our low estate, rescued our rights, liberties and laws from the slavish tyranny intended against us, and † as strongly supported us with his right hand, in opposition to those powers; who had they been as successful in the execution, as they were violent in their designs, would (had they not sustained this grievous loss) have

† Isa. chap. li. ver. 19.
§ Job, chap. xl. ver. 9.

| † Psal. xxxiii. ver. 10.

have swallowed us up quick, when they were so wrathfully displeased at us; but the battle is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the people †.

Once more, I would observe, that this catastrophe, (afflictive as it was) may yet be a great benefit to us, consider'd as a nation; for tho' I doubt not, but that some of our principal inhabitants may be deeply involv'd in this dreadful calamity; yet I say, it may prove beneficial to us as a nation, and God may shew himself to us to be God and not man, by bringing about a more glorious, solid, and lasting, as well as a more speedy peace, by thus depriving our enemies of men, treasure and ammunition, than the united force of ourselves and our allies, could possibly have done. Thus we see that God Almighty has as it were yearned on us, and taken such a resolution in our favour, as not to destroy us; and has shewn himself to be God and not man, both in the punishment which he permitted to threaten us, and also in exerting his mercy towards us; which punishments, altho' they may not wholly be removed, yet they may be suspended, in hopes that we (like Hezekiah) may repent, and so have a new life of peace and plenty granted to us.* I come now, in the last place,

IV. Fourthly, to make some reflections from what has been said: and here,

1. First,

† Psa. cxxiv. ver. 3. 1. Sam. xvii. 47. ver. Psa. xxii. ver. 28.

* Isa. chap. xxxviii. ver. 3. 5.

1. First, we may learn a lesson of praise and thanksgiving, that our day of repentance is not (like theirs) yet cut off, or shut up in an eternal night of darkness, but that we have still space left, to fill up that which is wanting in our duty and obedience: for even the best, in many things offend all†, and have great need of time and space therefore for the grace of repentance.

2. Secondly, let us be thankful, that by the good providence of God, we are plac'd in a climate, which by its situation is not so often liable to those very terrible shocks; but that we may safely sit down under our own vine and our own fig-tree, and eat the fruit of our labours,‡ unless (by our rebellious disposition and consequent actions) we provoke God to shew his power, in swallowing us up, by some sudden destruction. These kind circumstances of nature, in our situation and climate, may give us ground to hope, that we may live safely, and die in peace, but yet let us also with this hope mix a proper degree of fear and often humbly bow down before the God of Israel, to deprecate his judgments against our particular and our national sins, lest whilst we are filling up the measure of our iniquity§, he also should fill the vials of his wrath, and pour them upon us, when we think not of it*: for we may be well assur'd that he that will come, will come, and will not tarry||: and woe unto them, whom he shall then find
unfit

† James, chap. iii. ver. 2.

‡ 1. Kings, chap. iv. ver. 25.

2. Kings, ch. xviii. ver. 31.

§ Math. ch. xxiii. ver. 32.

* Rev. ch. xvi. ver. 1.

|| Heb. ch. x. ver. 37.

unfit to meet him; for then indeed, he will appear to be God and not man, even an avenging God, who punisheth iniquity, transgression and sin.

3. Thirdly, we may learn from the words of the text a great lesson of charity and good-will to others, I am God and not man, for one of the most conspicuous and God-like christian virtues is a readiness to forgive; and not only so, but to confer benefits even on those who have offended us: and so God here represents himself to us by saying, I am God, and not man, as if he had said, "you my creatures are continually wont to prey upon each other, and on every slight offence to shew a great resentment, whereas you ought to look into your selves, and examine the conduct of your own lives, in regard to the performance of those duties I require of you, and to see wherein you have offended: and then you will soon be convinced, that you have so much to be forgiven, that it will induce you most readily to pass by not only every slight failing of your brother, but even the greatest personal injuries and wrongs; that being the way, whereby you can the most effectually shew your likeness to me who am a God, ready to pardon, and willing to forgive. Another consideration which naturally arise from the text is,

4. Fourthly, an absolute trust in the Almighty, who is God, and not man who is absolute in power, and has all things at his disposal, who can turn even the hearts of men which way soever he pleases,

pleases||, to whose infinite Omnipotence all nature is subject, to whom the seas are but as a drop in the bucket, and in whose sight hell is naked, and destruction has no covering*. He is, as we have seen, that Omnipotent Jehovah, who can save by a few, as well as by many, and whose word is truth: He is Alpha and Omega†, the first and the last, and besides him there is no God, who can deliver in trouble, and be an immediate help, at what times soever the storms of affliction or dangers come upon us, because he is God and not man. Let us therefore rely upon, and most firmly place our confidence in him; not so as to render us neglectful of that duty which we owe him, and have in our power to perform, but so as to depend upon his aid, and seek help and assistance from none other, but only in a secondary view, as instruments under his direction: let us so believe him to be God and not man, as to endeavour to worship him, serve him, and obey him, as we ought to do: in all our ways, let us consider him, and firmly believe and hope that he will direct our paths.‡ And indeed had we wisdom and prudence sufficient of ourselves to chuse for ourselves a guide and protector, who would safely conduct and lead us through the valley of the shadow of death, (by which I mean this warfaring life) so that therein we might fear no ill; I say, would we wish for such a pilot, where could we find one on earth? in vain should we trust in princes§, or in any child

|| Luke, chap. i. ver. 17.

* Isa. xl. ver. 15.

Job. xxvi. ver. 6.

† Rev. ch. xxii. ver. 13.

‡ Prov. chap. iii. ver. 6.

§ Psa. cxlvi. ver. 3.

of man, for there is no help in them. It is not in man to direct his own ways, much less to protect and preserve his fellow creatures : no ; it is only He, who is God and not man, that hath dominion and power, and so keepeth his promise forever, as safely to be rely'd on : he only knows what storms from within, what temptations from without we are liable to : he and he only knows those rocks of infidelity on which we shall be most apt to split, and those quicksands of folly and ignorance, which will be most likely to betray and swallow us up, and in consequence, he is best able to guard and preserve us from them, by sending out his awakening judgments, as light-houses to the adventurous pilot at the helm ; from whence it may be truly said, that there is none among the Gods can be compared to the Lord*.

5. A fifth improvement deducible from the text is, that in all our approaches to this great Being, who is God and not man, we should appear before him in the most humble and submissive manner, be exceeding sensible of our own nothingness and vileness, and of our many necessities and wants, which will naturally induce us to acknowledge the many blessings we receive from him with a thankful heart, and to own we can have no merit in us, whereby to deserve them at his hands : and yet (as he condescends to represent himself yearning on his creatures, and being merciful unto them that fear him†, even as a father that pitieth his own children) we may come with confidence also, and humbly hope, that the importunate and fervent prayer of the penitent will not be cast off, but will prevail,

F f much

* Psalm lxxxix. ver. 6.

† Psalm ciii. ver. 13.

much with him, who is our merciful Father, as well as our great God. And if we are to have this filial dread of him in our daily devotions, and more solemn attendance on his ordinances; how much more are we to have in detestation those infidel principles, which are now so predominant amongst us? how amazing is the liberty those blasphemers take, who on every slight offence, so freely call on him, for curses on their brethren! surely if the consideration of his goodness and mercy, will not induce them to believe he will be deaf to such wicked imprecations, and that consequently they will not avail; yet one would think the consideration of his being a God of power, should make them fear, that their curses might recoil upon themselves, and their wickednesses fall upon their own heads: how much more monstrous are those, who not only do this, but also slight his ordinances, despise his ministers, and treat those sacred truths as fables, which alone can make them wise unto salvation. But how much still beyond even these are they, who take the liberty to deny his very Being, and to attribute that beautiful order of nature, (by the most wise subordination of which, the whole is daily preserved) to chance or accident: were I disposed to offer any plea as an extenuation of this their infidelity, it should be by supposing them to mean, (by these ridiculous appellations of chance or accident) the same unknown and incomprehensible Being whom we adore; and hereby to bring their aspiring pride down to, or even below a level with the heathens in the apostle's days; who not having the light of

of Revelation, made use of such terms, as appear'd most significant to their unenlighten'd judgments; or by hoping with St. Paul concerning the same heathens, that whom they ignorantly worship, is that God, he had declared unto them*. Let us then seriously and frequently meditate on the works and ways of God, and then we shall have infinite reason to praise and adore him, and to say with the apostle, how unsearchable is thy wisdom, and thy ways are past finding out†? we shall daily see that the heavens declare the glory of God; and that the firmament sheweth forth his wondrous works; that day unto day speaks forth his praise, and night unto night proclaims his knowledge‡. We shall by a due reflection on the things that are made (without prying into mysteries too great for our shallow comprehensions) be easily able to trace out his eternal power and godhead, and find the amplest and the most sufficient proof, that he is God and not man.

The last reflection I shall make from these words shall be this,

6. That, sixthly, as we have been now twice alarm'd ourselves, with the threatenings of destruction in a very striking manner, by two shocks of earthquakes, let us look upon them as warnings to us, to shake off our sins by repentance, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor. Let not these terrible indications and displays of God's almighty power be lost upon us, and of no effect, whilst we endeavour to account for
F f 2 their

* Acts xvii. ver. 23.

† Rom. xi. ver. 33.

‡ Psalm xix. ver. 1, 2.

§ Dan. iv. ver. 27.

their phenomena by means of second causes; for it matters to us very little whether they come mediately or immediately from the hand of God. Their direction is entirely from him; and as he has now only warned us, let us be moved to repentance by these his kind and gentle admonitions, lest by sinning again a worse thing happen to us. It is possible, and very likely, that at this present moment many, who heard and felt the then alarming commotions, are now no more, and have had but few days to fill up the measure of their repentance; let us then be most humbly thankful, that our day of repentance is not yet shut up in the eternal night of darkness, but that thro' his great and all-forgiving mercy, we have still space given us to fill up the measure of those virtues, which are still wanting in our souls; which if we take but care to do, we shall not hereafter have occasion to fear; but if the rocks are moved, and the hills are carried into the sea, yet we may joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our salvation, and shall have abundant reason for such rejoicing, inasmuch as he is God and not man*.

God has, as it were, said to us, ye will revolt more and more, but why will ye be stricken any more†? let us therefore repent, and turn from our evil ways, and so iniquity shall not be our ruin: let us by these warnings be so instructed, that God's soul may not depart from us, that he may not make us desolate, and as a land not inhabited‡. Let us live so, that when we come to die,

* Psalm xlv. ver. 2.

Heb. iii. ver. 18.

† Isa. i. ver. 5.

‡ Jer. vi. ver. 8.

die, we may be inflated, through God's mercies and Christ's merits, in that region of bliss which is at his right hand, and be made partakers of those pleasures, which last for evermore†, and which could not be prepared in so gracious and glorious a manner, but only by him, who is God and not man. If being saved from our enemies, and the hands of those that hate us, can prevail upon us; if being preserved from personal infection, though it may rage among our herds, has any force; if being fed with plenty and sufficiency, whilst we might fear a famine in our land, is of any weight; if we find no decay, no leading into captivity, oh! let there be no murmurings, no complainings, much less blasphemous and horrid imprecations, be heard in our most public streets: but let every scoffer who shall dare to insult the majesty of heaven courageously and sharply be reprov'd; and instead of opening our mouths profanely in ungrateful and discontented murmurs, let every mouth be fill'd with praise, and join in one universal chorus of hallelujahs, to him who is God, and not man.

† Psalm xvi. ver. 11.

Sermon

Sermon XI.

The danger of too exalted a station.

Pfalm xlix. ver. 20.

Man being in honour hath no understanding, but is compar'd unto the beasts that perish.

THE vast variety and regular gradations of created beings, which we see in the world, as they are a convincing argument of the being of a God, so are they also living witnesses to confront all manner of infidelity; for the curious observer into nature will, by a proper application of the mind, find out infinite beauties in every part of the creation, and may trace their dependencies on each other so far, as easily to discern one principal or first cause or mover of all. In regard to himself, he may be considered, as it were, filling up a kind of middle space in the chain of beings, and by observation will find, that his understanding is vastly superior to any other creatures here below; that he is favoured with such emanations of divinity, that must convince him he is constituted of a double nature, a soul and a body; that to each of these different natures there are particular functions

ons and operations assigned, by the improvement of which he arrives to such a pitch of knowledge, as absolutely to render all other things below him subservient to his use and benefit; and thus answers the end of his creation; and becomes as it were lord of this lower world: but then in order to exercise this dominion properly, he must also reflect, that the endowments of power and superiority over the rest in honour and greatness, are but so many talents lent him by the great and wise disposer of all things; and that he is absolutely accountable for every one of them. He should also consider the danger that attends them, and that if he suffers them too far to mislead him, and to blind his understanding, (which they are very apt to do) he will then fall under the assertion in the text, that he being in honour hath no understanding, and is therefore compared to the beasts that perish.

From the words thus stated, I shall do the following things,

I. First, endeavour to shew particularly what the Psalmist means, by that expression, Man being in honour.

II. Secondly, prove how liable he is (virtually, if not actually) to lose his understanding, for want of making a proper use of it, under the influencing temptation of an honourable estate.

III. Thirdly, consider the terrible consequence thereof, namely, the being compar'd to the beasts that perish.

IV. Fourthly,

IV. Fourthly, and lastly, I shall prove, how much worse it will be with man, when he comes to die, who has no way improv'd his talents, than with the brutes, consider'd in regard to the life to come.

I. First then, I am to shew what is meant by man's being in honour.

Ambition, avarice, and lust of power, are so interwoven in the tempers of most men, that they seem to place their whole comfort, consolation and happiness in endeavouring to raise and aggrandize themselves, by any means, to an entire superiority over their fellow creatures, not only such as by the great disposer of all things, seem originally design'd to be in subserviency to them; but even those on whom they themselves seem, on the contrary, to be as it were in a state of dependence: this passion has universally prevailed in all (even the earliest) ages of the world; so as to make its acquisition the summum bonum, or ultimate end of their desires: and in consequence, as these increased, so much the more honourable were their stations reckon'd: and it was soon seen that the rich had many friends, whilst the poor was despised by his neighbour*: no one, not even the possessors, having any regard, but to the possession only, without taking into consideration the proper use of an exalted station; making their power only subservient to the gratifying their insatiable and misguided passions. Again, the expression of man's being in honour may also include the out-

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* Prov. xiv. ver. 20.

ward respect and undeserved adulations which are paid him by his fellow creatures, not from a persuasion of any intrinsic merit in him, but only as a necessary consequence of his elevated station. Indeed it sometimes, tho' but rarely happens, that the kind incidents of fortune meet in a mind every way qualified to receive them: and this may serve as another explanation of the words: for, tho' I say, it is very rare, that the sunshine of God's grace beams so strongly in the dark mind of man, as to prevent these glittering toys from giving any lustre: tho' there are few consider them as they really are, but as glowworms to the traveller, leading him into erroneous paths, from which he finds it difficult to retreat: yet where this does happen, and the endowments of the mind and the gifts of fortune meet together, it may most emphatically be described a being in honour: a man so possessed may justly be said to be in honour; but then the misfortune is, that the undistinguishing world is very little apt to judge properly, and it so happens, that the height of honour is the thing to which they pay their submission, and not the person possessing it: now when this appears to be the case, as it most generally is, then is the time to arm against the latent temptation, lest we come under the royal Psalmist's conclusive censure in the text, and should have no understanding, by suffering it to be blinded by a partial confidence in those, who from the fear of losing a powerful friend, will soothe him in his vices (from which the best are not entirely free) will say as he says, do as he does, put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter*; and all this

* Isa. v. ver. 20.

this merely in compliance with the bent and bias of his own warp'd and perverted inclinations. Which naturally leads me to the second thing proposed; namely, to shew

II. Secondly, how liable a man is, for want of making a proper use of his understanding, to lose it under the influencing temptation of an honourable state. There is a wide difference between a state of nature and a state of grace, the first inherent in, and born with us, the latter to be acquired by us with great pains, diligence, vigilance, and care; which is described to us as a race, a fight, a warfare, wherein we must be always on our guard, like a careful general, lest our enemy surprize us at unawares. We have all reason to say with David, lo! I was shapen in iniquity; in sin hath my mother conceived me*: this we find evident and visible in our selves, and we need have no other things to struggle with, than the sin in which we were born, and that iniquity in which we were conceived. But notwithstanding this, we find, we shall have also many evil habits to overcome, many passions to curb, numberless struggles between the law in our members and that in our minds†, and shall at every turn be apt to let go our integrity, whilst we are striving to get to a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus: and tho' propt up by the force of the strongest resolutions, yet we shall be often apt to start aside like a broken bow, and to fall from our own steadfastness,

* Psalm li.

† Rom. vii. ver. 23.

† Eph. chap. iv. ver. 13.

fastness§: and if, whilst we are thus upon our guard, we have such reason to fear the loss of our understandings, (in a moral sense) how much more when we are surrounded by every temptation and importunity of nominal honours, and the fawning adulations of designing sycophants, with which our reason is soonest overcome, in as much as flattery coincides with the natural bent and disposition of our self-partial minds, and seems (as it were) to abet us in the pursuit of sin and iniquity. Few can be in possession of a Babylon, without crying out with Nebuchadnezzar, is not this that great Babylon, which I have built by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty||? Few are proof against the Philistines temptations, or can resist betraying their best beloved Sampson, when brib'd thereto by an alluring bait. We see even Solomon, who had a more than ordinary share of wisdom and prudence imparted to him, even so as to exceed all that went before him; yet when in consequence of his power and riches he indulged himself in whatever his eyes desired, and deprived himself of no joy; it soon had the effect upon him here mentioned in the text, that he lost his understanding so far, as to fall a victim easily to every alluring bait, every sensual crime: it was at the height of his grandeur, and not till then, that he indulg'd himself with so many concubines, and turned his heart after other gods, as in the sacred history we may see at large.

And thus it is (or would be so) with every one of us; for we are weak and feeble creatures, soon

§ Hosea vii. ver. 16.

|| Dan. iv. ver. 30.

soon carried out of ourselves, and are apt to forget the hand from whence we receive all our good things. In any conquest over our antagonist, puffed up and elevated, we are apt to say, with my own right hand have I gotten myself the victory, not considering that the battle is the Lord's, and that he is governor among the people: instead of which we should say with David, be thou exalted, Lord, in thy own strength, so will we sing of, and will praise thy power*: for the race is not to the swift, no more than the battle to the strong, or riches to men of understanding†; but what the Lord pleases that does he, in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in all deep places‡. Our Saviour, who well knew what was in man, was throughly sensible of the power of temptations, and in consequence (tho' he was God incarnate) he thought proper so to humble himself, (whilst clothed with our flesh) as to pray most vehemently, lest he should fall in the hour of temptation: and herein he left us an example that we should follow his footsteps, and adds thereto a precept, watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; for tho' the spirit be willing, yet the flesh is weak§. And again, in his divine prayer, he bid us pray, lead us not into temptation||. From all which we may learn, how apt we are under any temptation (whether in an honourable or a too afflicted state) to lose our understanding, for want of exerting it in a proper manner.

III. I come

* Psalm xxi. ver. 13.

† Eccl. ix. ver. 11.

‡ Psalm cxxxv. ver. 6.

§ Mark xiv. ver. 38.

|| Math. vi. ver. 13.

III. I come now, thirdly, to consider the terrible consequence of thus (in a moral sense) losing our understandings, conveyed to us in these words; but is compared unto the beasts that perish.

If a man be in ever so exalted a state, in point of wealth, honours, &c. yet if by an ill conformation of the organs of his body, the exerting of his faculties is either impeded or rendered useless, he may in this sense be compared unto the beasts that perish, tho' this renders him not guilty of an abuse of it.

1. First, because he wants the chief and most distinguishing characteristic of difference in nature between the animal and rational creature. And,

2. Secondly, because he cannot be rendered any more than the beasts an accountable creature; but must by being a fool or madman, be deem'd an irrational, and consequently an unaccountable creature.

1. First, reason is the great characteristic of man, and is the only thing that sets him above the rest of the creation, for (setting this aside) he is no other than an animal, and that too of the most defenceless nature: and this seems to be a distinguish'd beauty in the works of the creation, that man by this may be led to look to the rock, from whence he was hewn*, and to depend solely on the omnipotence of his God, for his support and help.

He sees himself daily surrounded by difficulties he cannot overcome, and by dangers he can neither foresee nor prevent, incom-

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* Isa. li. ver. 1.

pass'd with wants which he cannot supply, without the assistance of a wise superintendent being; liable to evils of every kind, and yet void of power to remedy or redress them; and in his natural capacity (consider'd apart from his understanding) infinitely below the other parts of the creation: the animals exceed him in every other respect, and the pleasures of the brutes are much more exquisitely enjoy'd by them than by man.

How are the wearisome steps of infancy to be tended, and the rising ideas to be nourish'd, before they can arrive at the least dawning of wisdom or understanding, and when arriv'd at some degree of it, yet how must the budding knowledge be gently guarded from the inlet of folly as from a nipping frost, which would soon render it abortive. But with the brutes it is not so; for the little brood of animals soon (very soon) arrive at the summit of their knowledge: they quickly learn to apply their little puny forces to defend themselves; soon acquire sufficient cunning to find their proper sustenance and food: and this is done not only by the fiercer beasts of prey, but even by the (seemingly) most insignificant animal that lives. And if man is thus below the brute creation in his natural state (simply consider'd) how much more must he be liable to this degradation, when, by the depravity of his mind, he loses his understanding, (I don't mean his senses) in a moral sense, which is the same with what the Psalmist speaks of here: for he says in the text, he
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is compar'd to the beasts that perish: but that is not all; for,

IV. Fourthly, it must be consider'd, that with a view to a life to come, man is in a much more miserable state than the brutes: For if the bird forsakes her young, or the lioness her whelps; the worst that can befall them is to die; but man has still an after-reckoning to expect, and that reason and understanding, which were implanted in him by his maker, must be accounted for, as it has been used or abused by him. The man who is sluggish in the concerns of his soul, and who has only employ'd his rational faculties on irrational pursuits, will in vain hope to find an asylum in a bed of annihilation, for it will not be so. All that is merely animal of him will die for a time, and having paid the great and general debt of nature, that which is dust will return to dust again, but his immortal part will survive to all eternity; and will moreover in the day of retribution be reunited to his body, to share with it according to his doings here.

When Nebuchadnezzar, that great and mighty, that proud and haughty king of Babylon, was so intoxicated with his grandeur and high living, as to be bereaved of his senses, he fancied himself a beast, and ran into the fields to eat grass like the ox; which punishment might be designed constitutionally good, as well as in regard to his understanding: and, it is possible, his living after such a manner, might have

have such an effect upon him, as to bring him to himself, and he might, after reflecting what had happen'd, see the relation in which he stood to God his maker, and thence be led to live agreeable to his will: but this debased state, this literal comparison of him to the beasts, would not have been a necessary punishment to him, had he not abus'd that high exalted station, to which he was advanc'd.

Thus we have seen what is meant by a state of honour, and what by the danger it exposes us to, both with respect to the natural as well as moral sense of the word: and yet I fear there are few, on whom this discourse will have so much effect, as (tho' they should be persuaded of the truths laid down) to make them ready to resign and quit their posts of honour, or to part with their deluding circumstances, in order at the same time to get rid of their danger too: but they will still hug their deceitful Dalilahs, and like the man in the gospel, who had great possessions, will go away sorrowful, at the thought of parting with them; tho' they, like him, are convinced they ought to be parted with, in order to gain the kingdom of God and his righteousness, they will still venture on the shipwreck of temptation, tho' (if they consider) they must know how slender the plank is to which they trust for safety; even the deluding hopes of (some time or other perhaps) repenting of their folly: we are all apt enough to see the deformity of oppressive luxury, and the many vices attendant

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on a state of affluence and abundance; but then we are as apt also to believe it impossible (supposing the case our own) that we should fall into the same fault, or be guilty of the same crimes: we are ready to cry out with Hazael, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this*? and yet this very self confidence, is what is most likely to betray us into the commission of any crime; whereas one who suspects his own heart, will endeavour to keep it with all diligence, lest he fall, being duly sensible, he is in jeopardy every hour.

I have before hinted, that the loss of the understanding in man, mention'd in the text, must arise from a vicious consent of the will, through which by degrees the soul is hardened, and the judgment and understanding so overcome, as that the man really may be said virtually to have lost it; not that I would intimate hereby, that they do lose that perception of things, which is the test of right and wrong; because if so, then they would be in no capacity accountable creatures (no more than the idiot or madman above-mentioned, who might be render'd so by some bodily disorder) and consequently not liable to rewards or punishments, for their actions whether good or bad: but they lose it by not using it, and therefore by that negligence, put themselves thus upon a par with the brutes, who really have it not to use, if they would.

Mankind

* 2 Kings viii. ver. 13.

Mankind are in general very proud of their persons, and of the endowments of their minds, inasmuch as they call reason an endowment. But surely did they consider, how much they debase themselves, by indulging their sensual appetites; did they but reflect how far they are from reverencing themselves, for that likeness which they stand in to their Creator; in regard to their spiritual part; they would not live such wicked lives as they do: nor would they so industriously endeavour, to imbibe those notions of infidelity, which must necessarily and by consequence debase their beings, and must (since they are so generally spread through the world) as it were unsoul mankind, and thereby rob God also of his honour, by suffering those creatures, whom he originally stamped with the divine image of himself, to be levelled with the brute creation.

Nor again, would they (did they consider aright) endeavour to calumniate or disbelieve that mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, to destroy the works of the devil*, or treat it as an impossibility, because they cannot merely (by reason) conceive the adequate manner of the hypostatic union of an incarnate God. But this is cavilling (as I apprehend) more than reasoning, and is nothing but a vicious tendency of the soul, and a downright abuse of their rational faculties, and will not stand them in any stead at the day of judgment; for now light is sprung up for the righteous,

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and gladness for the upright in heart†, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and consequently, if by this light they will not be enlightened, it will be a vain pretence in them to say we did not believe, because the means of conviction, and a help to the erring reason is equally offer'd to them, as to those, who willingly lay hold of its assisting power; and whilst the one chuses to be like the horse and mule, which have no understanding‡, the other is endeavouring to ennoble (by the united assistance of reason and revelation) that divine part, which as it cannot die, he is desirous should be for ever happy. To such of them, who (tho' they may not be steady in their faith, yet) are not obstinately blind, I would endeavour to offer a consideration or two, to help them to an assentive faith, in regard to this point, which are these.

I. First, can they form any tolerable notion of that union which subsists in their own souls and bodies? can they at all imagine the nature of that quickening spirit, which enters into the embryo, whilst in the dark confines and recesses of the mother's womb? can they at all account for these things? and yet they believe it is so, because they see it, by the mediation of their senses: all this however is not a rational conviction founded upon metaphysical principles, which is what, one would suppose, they seek after in things relating

† Psalm xcvi. ver. 24.

‡ Psalm xxxii. ver. 9.

relating to religion, and to the particular case of Christ's divinity.

2. Again, secondly, I would desire them to make use of that reason which they so much boast of, to help themselves to arguments, not only for the being of a God (which some of them even venture to deny) but also for his omnipotence and omnipresence, which attributes they plainly see he can and does exert, when, and in what manner he pleases; tho' these are things they are not able to conceive: from all which I would infer, that as God fills heaven, earth, and every place, even from the most minute point of space, to its greatest immensity; why might he not in order to fulfil the purposes of his wisdom, in the work of our redemption, be pleased to cloath himself with, or be resident in the narrow tabernacle of our flesh, as well as to be present for our safety in a time of danger, without staggering our faith in, or at all impairing his ubiquity, or without giving us a particular account, how and why he did it, any more than what he has told us, that it was for our advantage and salvation.

This miserable state of disbelief in them, may most eminently be called losing the understanding; but yet this will not so far put them upon a level with the brutes, as perhaps they would wish it should: for they will die like men, and like men too they must rise again at the great day of account, when the reunion of their souls may, perhaps, too late convince them of the truths

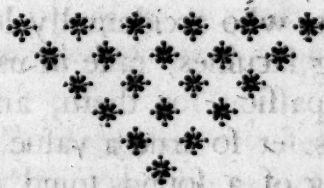
truths they now deride; and when also too late they will remember the force they put upon their minds (to which all nature spoke the mystery of God's providence, and our creation and redemption) before they could arrive at that degree of infidelity, in which they lived. And for the truth of this, let their own consciences be witnesses with me, and say, whether they have not often doubted their own assertions, and often had misgivings in their minds, that the truths of revelation might be as had been related to them; and whether they did not think those attempts vain, whereby they strove so to brutify (if I may use the expression) their natures, as to render themselves no more accountable than those very brutes.

This is the fourth proposition, and, I think, fully proves, that the state of these men, who thus wilfully lose their own understandings, considered with a view to a life to come, is much worse than that of the brutes.

3. Lastly, let the consideration of those unhappy persons, who accidentally lose their senses and discerning faculties, raise in us a very tender care and compassion for them, and at the same time make us set so true a value on that inestimable blessing of a sound mind or good parts, that we may be always thankful to providence for them, and exert them to his glory and our own good.

I shall add no more at present, but beg of God, that we may have sufficient grace so to walk
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before him, with a due dependence on him, as our Creator, with an humble hope in him, as our Redeemer; and that by a proper reverence of ourselves, we may so reverence him, as to fix in our minds, just and true (which will always prove rational) notions of him, and may make such use of our intellectual faculties, as never to poison them by erroneous conceits, and wicked practices; that so we may be far from being like the brutes that perish; but on the contrary, by a due cultivation and improvement of our talents, may be made partakers of his glory, which is doubtless suited to our rational natures, and may have our understandings employ'd to all eternity, in adoring his infinite perfections, and praise him, for making us capable of such exalted bliss. Amen.



making us capable of such exalted bliss. Amen.

Sermon XII.

Considerations for unity, from the generality of God's providence, our own frame, nature, hopes, and common obligations to duty.

Ephes. chap. iv. ver. 4, 5, 6, 7.

There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

One God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

THESE words are part of that exhortation of St. Paul the preacher to the Gentiles, wherein he exhorts the Ephesians to unity among themselves; and he here makes use of a very cogent argument to that purpose, by telling them, that they were all of one body, and one spirit, i. e. they were all incorporated members of the original rational creation; all
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equally called (by his preaching to them) to a belief in the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent; that they had been, or were all to be, equally baptized into this one faith, and were all creatures of the same God, and children of the same common father, whose holy spirit was in all; exciting them to the practice of their duty: to the performance of which, he further animates and stirs them up, by telling them at the same time, that they should be all helped by the spirit of God, according to that measure thereof, which (through Christ) is sufficiently given to every one for an attainment of eternal life.

This being premised, I shall from the words of the text take occasion to shew;

I. First, what is meant by one God and father of all.

II. Secondly, what by one faith, one baptism, and one hope of our calling.

III. Thirdly, what by one body and one spirit.

IV. Fourthly, what by that expression of being called in one hope of our calling.

V. Fifthly, I shall endeavour to follow the Apostle's example, and (to these considerations) add some excitements to a strict unity and agreement amongst ourselves, that so we may be able to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

I. First

I. First then, I am to explain what is meant by one God and father of all. That there is but one God is evident from many texts of scripture, and from the nature of things themselves; but as the controversy relating to the unity of his existence, or three fold personality of essence, is not the subject of my present discourse, or the point now in hand, I shall therefore wave entering into a discussion of the manner how, and only endeavour to prove, that he actually does exist; and that,

First, from the reason of things; and, secondly, from several texts of scripture.

We are surrounded in this age by a number of infidels, who, upon very weak principles, endeavour to eradicate the notion of a God, and, in consequence, all doctrines built thereupon, any otherwise than is consistent with their own conceptions; who are continually endeavouring to invalidate all searches after truth, which are not levelled to that standard, which they have set up as the rule and governing principle of their actions; and consequently as they cannot adequately conceive of the existence of the first cause of being, unless they will take into the account somewhat of the scripture doctrine on that head, so they impute all to an eternity of chance, and maintain that the frame of nature was originally formed by the fortuitous jumbling and rejumping of atoms according to their specifick gravities, and that it still subsists in

the same beautiful order in which it now appears, by the continuance of the same casual gravitation; but this is so inconsistent with the reason of man, (whose knowledge of, or reflection upon himself, must lead him to a first cause and mover of all things) that one would imagine it impossible, any one should suffer his reason to be so overcome, as to give into this notion: nor can I really conceive there can be such a being, as a theoretical or speculative atheist, tho' it is too melancholy a truth, that there are too many practical ones, who, tho' they dare not in their words, yet in their works deny him: let them but for a moment reflect, on the confusion and disorder, which preternatural accidental events, (if they allow of such) cause in the universal system of nature, whenever they happen, and from thence infer, what infinitely greater confusion must be occasioned upon their hypothesis, of chance governing all the motions of inert matter, or in other words, upon a supposition that the whole universe in all its constituent parts is not nor ever was govern'd by the wisdom of a first uncreated cause, or fix'd in its modification and existence, by the determination and wisest resolves of a beginningless being.

This doctrine also, when view'd in the mirror of reason, is very uncomfortable; for what security can we have of safety, in our goings out or comings in, whilst we are continually liable to those unfortunate and (for us) unforeseen events, which are likely to befall us, when under

der the direction, or rather subject to the non-direction of blind chance; whilst we can rely on no proper rules of safety, on no precautions we ourselves can take by way of self-preservation, but must entirely depend for it upon an irrational and undistinguishing principle, which must be the case, or else they must allow chance itself to be wise; which is a contradiction, inasmuch as it supposes existence in what cannot possibly exist: but if, on the contrary, we take another view of our state, as under the direction of an almighty and an all-wise providence; we therein may comfortably rest for preservation from dangers, direction in doubts, support in need, and all other things necessary for our well-being here; when we suppose that being, on whom we depend, endued with every faculty that can make us happy. Again, if we take a view of our own natures and observe how much it is in our power, to govern the things without us, it certainly cannot seem inconsistent to suppose, that some being infinitely above us, may also contrive, determine, and act, as infinitely more wise than we do, and from whom we ourselves receive our powers of action. And if we cannot avoid evils, nor govern ourselves aright, without making use of our utmost care and prudence, it surely can be no unreasonable supposition, that the great and general frame of unthinking nature should stand in need of a superintendent and wise determiner of its eventuous motions, in order to keep up that proper menagerie, which is conducive and necessary to the
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good of the whole. Now this cannot (as I said before) be chance, unless we will suppose chance wise, which will be of itself a proof, and will amount to much the same as the asserting that there is a God, which, I think, I have plainly shewn; and by this rectitude in his government he may also be stiled the father of all: there is one God and father of all. For if the subordinate or inferior powers of generation, or giving life, which we are endued with by him, be a good reason for our being denominated fathers; how much more shall he be so denominated who was the first original of all life! He, from whom not only we receive our life, and breath, and all things*, but from whom also the natural, animal, vegetable, and mineral creation exist and receive their powers; how much more may he be called father of all, whose power is uncontrollable, and whose wisdom is infinite, if we receive that title only on account of guiding the uniform'd steps of weak and helpless infancy.

Thus far may serve as a proof from reason: I come now to prove it from revelation or scripture. Was our reason only to conjecture, and then to leave us in an undetermin'd state as to this matter, yet here revelation opens to us a door of absolute certainty; because revelation supposes a revealer, and a revealer of doubtful things to satisfaction supposes wisdom, and wisdom, in the last place, contradicts the power of chance, or of an unwise blind determiner, and yet leads us to

* Acts xvii. ver. 25.

to a first cause, by a kind of ipse dixit, or proof, out of the power of reason to arrive at. As this is rational proof for a revelation, let us then without arguing further, how this revelation was brought down to us, (which might easily be shewn, would time permit) take it for granted from these propositions, that there is a rule reveal'd, by which we are to judge of, what bare unenlighten'd reason never will suffice wholly to satisfy us in: to this rule let us go for the proof of a God, to the law and to the testimony*, and see if they speak not according to this word; try if they contain not sufficient proof of the Apostle's assertion, that there is one God and father of all. We are told by Moses, that God created all things†; and David declares, that by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth§: He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and beside him there is no God‡. And how gloriously do the angels address him in the divine Trisagion, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. He it is, and he alone, who has immortality, and whose glorious throne from the beginning can only be hereafter the place of our sanctuary||; i. e. He, as the sole perfect being, who made heaven and earth, and all things therein, is the only proper object of our trust. He it was, who in the beginning laid the foundations of the world,

and

* Isa. viii. ver. 20.

† Gen. ch. i.

‡ Psalm xxxiii. ver. 6.

§ Rev. c. i. ver. 8, 11. c. xxi. v. 6. c. xxii. ver. 13. Isa. ch. xliv. ver. 6.
|| Jer. xvii, ver. 12.

and the heavens are the work of his hands; and though they perish, and wax old as a garment, yet he is the same, and his years fail not*. Tho' they all turn to their original nothingness, yet he shall endure; for with him is no variableness, nor the least shadow of turning†. Therefore he must be God. Every divine attribute supposes a divine being possessed of it, and though some of the attributes of God may be inconceivable as to their natures, whilst others are the proper objects of our praise and faith; yet are the most mysterious of them no way contradictory to his infinite essence or godship; nor can any of them be ascribed to a less penetrative being, and least of all to chance, which is unexisting.

This I take to be sufficient to prove the first assertion; that there is one God and father of all. I shall now endeavour to explain what is meant,

II. Secondly, by one faith, one baptism, and one hope of our calling. And,

I. First, what I have instanced in, may be deem'd one main article for proof of this one faith specified in the text; that is, that we firmly assent to a belief in one God and father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all; which I take to be universally assented to, tho' under gross clogs of ignorance by the generality; who, whilst they worship several subordinate or mediating deities, mean ultimately to worship this one God thro' these various adumbrations.

But

* Psalm cii. ver. 25, 26, 27.

† James i. ver. 17.

But were mankind once fully persuaded of the truth of this proposition; as it would seem strange to see that vast variety of opinions which prevails in the world, and to observe in them so many different forms or modes of worship, so I shall endeavour to consider in what light these several systems may be made conformable to, and brought to quadrate with this uniform rule of faith. At first light it seems very difficult so to reconcile the Pagan ignorance, the Popish martyrologies, the Jewish obstinacy, the Gentile pride, and the reigning infidelity of our age, as to make them appear to be govern'd by one faith, or to shew that there is but one; when we behold the Asiatics worshipping the planets, or some part of the brute creation; the Turks paying adoration to a deluding Mahomed; it is difficult to reconcile their worship to the above test, or to endeavour to prove, that they mean to worship the one supreme God; which yet I verily believe they do, in the sense we have been representing him, as a God and father of all; and that tho' their different systems of faith are clouded with many imperfections, yet were the veil removed, they might be deem'd one faith. How again, shall we reconcile the blind zeal of the Romanists, who pretend to murder out of conscience, to that peaceable disposition of the son of God, manifested in the flesh, to destroy the works of the devil? how shall we reconcile the Jewish obstinacy and wilful blindness, in persecuting Christ and his followers, to those plain and obvious

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predictions

predictions of him by the prophets, who therein declared him to be the sent of God? how shall we obviate the Gentile pride, and bring that down to the standard of the gospel; when we are to find them out as a neglected people, and represented to us only as the wild branches of the true olive tree? for this must greatly clash with those wise Greeks, who so boasted of their knowledge, as to count the cross of Christ which Paul preached, foolishness to them; or, how lastly, and which is most material to us, shall we stem the torrent of infidelity, profaneness and irreligion, by proofs of this kind; at a time when even those who profess to believe are so defective in their faith and practice, and do not join seriously together to contend for, and strenuously maintain those truths, which were once delivered to the saints? how shall we set all these difficulties to rights, and at the same time prove, that there is but one faith, one baptism, and one hope of our calling? the most accurate way of doing this, I am sensible, would be to examine, and answer separately all the different species of sects, and their respective arguments in support of the several tenets they espouse; but as this would too much swell the bounds of a single discourse, and is foreign to my present design, I shall wave it, and content myself with doing it in the following succinct manner.

St. Paul affirms this to be the unsearchable mystery of Christ, and tho' he declares it true, that there is but one faith, yet he calls it the

effectual

effectual working of God's power*; without which, no one can see what is the fellowship of this divine mystery, or how (without thus resolving it into divine power) salvation through faith should be efficacious to all: he tells us this mystery had been hid in God from the beginning of the world†, and in Jesus Christ, by whom he created all things, to the end that to principalities and powers, might hereafter be known in the church, the manifold wisdom of God§.

How far an assentive faith is required from those who have opportunity of conviction, I pretend not to determine, any further than I am warranted so to do from scripture; which tells us, that without faith it is impossible to please God||, and wherein we are commanded to try and see whether these things are so: nor will I on the other hand presume to exclude any from the benefit of atonement through Christ, whom the all-seeing wisdom of God knows, would believe if they had the means of faith offer'd to them; and yet from an equal display of God's wisdom, he did not think fit they should have it; for they (being without a revealed law) acting up to the law they have in themselves to the best in their powers, will under such a privation be equally acceptable to God, and saved through Christ, as tho' they had the privilege of faith.

We are told by our Saviour, that the times would come, when those who killed his prophets,

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* Ephes. iii. ver. 7. † Ver. 9. § Ver. 10. || Heb. xi. ver. 6.

phets and slew such as were sent unto them*, would think they did God good service; and tho' we have seen this literally fulfilled, not only in the apostolical days, but also in the present Romish church, yet I very much fear, that true zeal for God is the least ingredient in this persecuting spirit; and yet I doubt not but some of the most ignorant among them hereby mean to propagate the mediatorial scheme of a reconciliation through Christ this way, tho' so very contrary to his gospel, and the purity of our Protestant churches, and inasmuch as they know no better; provided they shut not their eyes wilfully, they may be accepted in this one faith and hope of their calling: the words here, one faith, meaning, as I apprehend, one end of faith; namely, salvation in and through Christ, and not at all the mere mode or form of worship. This perhaps was the thing, which led the Ephesian converts, to dispute among themselves: they perhaps all of them might endeavour to follow Christ, tho' (as now in our many dissensions and divisions) they might do it in different formulas of worship: and upon account of these rituals, and only on their account, they might have need of exhortations to unity. Thus far the Pagans, and the Romanists too, I would hope, are included in salvation hereby; who may be said to worship God as the God and Father of all, tho' they ignorantly worship him thro' the blindness of their zeal.

The

* John xvi. ver. 2.

The Jews, I think, can no way herein be excluded; for tho' their expectations were of a temporal Saviour, yet as they are blinded by the prejudices of their education, and their too strict adherence and attachment to the traditions of their fathers, and consequently do not yield an assentive faith to the gospel terms, or to the declarations therein made of Christ's being come; yet as they expectantly look for a mediator, and live in such faith and hope, so I would willingly conceive, that this distant expectation of theirs might be term'd a tendency to this centre of faith, tho' by the most ignorant and slow advances. For, as St. Paul said to the men of Ephesus, Him whom ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you*; so this future expectation of the Jews, may for aught we know be deem'd to them, thro' the mercy of God, and the merits of Christ, a saving hope if not a saving faith. This is the hope of their calling, and this is the hope of all our callings, and if a view to this salvation regulates their practice, it will thro' Christ be imputed to them, who are the lost sheep of the house of Israel†; or else those sheep whom our Saviour speaks of, when he says, other sheep have I who are not of this fold‡.

Again, if we take a further view of the mediatorial satisfaction of Christ, and trace it to it's original, we shall find it was to reinstate all mankind in that bliss, which as descendants of Adam they had forfeited by his fall. Now
this

* Acts xvii. ver. 23. † Matt. x. ver. 6. ‡ John x. ver. 46.

this is general salvation without exception, that as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive§; and we are expressly told that the faith of the patriarchs had a view to the recompence in Christ||. And if so, why may not Christ's merit be imputed to those whose lives are consistent with an enlivening faith, tho' perhaps they do not see it: our Saviour said to the Jews, your father Abraham desir'd to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad*; but this joy in faith may not perhaps be granted to all, who yet may steer their lives greatly adequate thereto: by all I have said, I mean to extend the validity of Christ's satisfaction, whereby God was reconciling the world unto himself†, as far as possible, and I will venture to affirm, that it is extensive enough to include all well meaners therein, and those who strive to do their duty, to the best of their knowledge and abilities, and who, if they have no further opportunities, do practise those duties, which are imply'd or impress'd on the mind of man by nature. I would hereby endeavour to inculcate an universal charity, and to hope that all may be saved thro' Christ; and we may be allow'd to hope for them that are without, tho' not to judge them; for saith St. Paul, what have we to do to judge them that are without? but them that are without God judgeth†: so whether they are Jews, Turks,

§ 1 Cor. xv. ver. 22.

|| Rom. iv. ver. 18.

* John viii. ver. 56.

† 2 Cor. v. ver. 19.

† 1 Cor. v. ver. 12, 13.

Turks, infidels, or hereticks, we must leave them all to God, and only beg for their being included through conversion, in his good time. To some it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, whilst others were to have their eyes blinded, and their understandings darkened, that seeing they might see and might not perceive†; and to such as these, whether they were prevented by the grossness of their ideas, or by the non-appearance of the gospel of truth, to them it is all one: and provided the Almighty sees (as I before observ'd) that they would give their assent to revelation when offer'd, it is virtually the same to them, as if they had seen and had believed.

Our Saviour said, blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed*, and that I think may suppose, and support the point in question, and determine the possibility of a saving faith, tho' not founded on ocular or rational demonstration: else what would be the case of children (of whom as our Saviour tells us the kingdom of heaven is) who cannot be said to have a rational, a willing, or an assentive faith.

The hardest task yet remains, which is, how we shall reconcile the unbelief of our modern Freethinkers and infidels to this criterion of saving faith, and inclose them in that pale of salvation, which they absolutely reject; whilst they resist the counsel of God against themselves, whilst

† Mark iv. ver. 11, 12.

* John xx. ver. 29.

whilst they go counter to all the means of conviction, and by a kind of postulatatum, or begging the question, deny a revelation, to which they will not yield, tho' brought down to their very doors: and finally altho' they have a sound and rational judgment, they will not employ it any other way, but in scoffing at faith, which is the very basis of religion.

I must own, while they persist in this obstinacy, there is no hope; for there is no fellowship between Christ and Belial,* between an all-convincing light, and a most obstinate, inflexible, and contumacious darkness. The only thing on their part is a hope of amendment, and that they too will soon turn to the Lord, even while he may be found†; and a hope that the effectual working of God's spirit may shew them this mystery of faith to conviction‡, that before they are summon'd hence, they will be brought (by some impulse upon their minds, strong enough to convince them) to a true, lively and saving faith: for else they will find, that if they are without faith, when all convincing means have been made use of, they will be punished for their neglect in not acquiring it: and in such a case, having depriv'd themselves of it, will be displeasing to God; and consequently unrewarded by him; for thus being without faith, it is impossible to please God§: and yet even to these, there is hope, that if they turn to God, he will turn to them in mercy. There may be hope of them,

* 2 Cor. vi. ver. 15.

† Isa. lv. ver. 6, 7.

‡ Eph. iii. ver. 7.

§ Heb. xi. ver. 6.

them, if they will lop off their infidel principles (even as there is hope of a tree that is cut down||) that they may sprout again, into a lively, saving faith in Christ and God. Thus we see, that we have all one hope of our calling, and that tho' we may not all be called at one hour of the day, tho' we may not all have the comfortable reflective faith, yet we may all tend towards the same hope, of being one day called thro' Christ to be partakers of a blessed immortality; or at least may all join in this one point, the belief of a first uncreated cause.

All that now remains on this head is, that there is one baptism: which may be included in the former proposition; but this, with what further remains to be handled, must be referred to another opportunity.

|| Job xiv. ver. 7.

Sermon XIII.

Considerations for unity, from the generality of God's providence, our own frame, nature, hopes and common obligations to duty.

Ephes. chap. iv. ver. 4, 5, 6, 7.

There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

One God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

FROM these words I proposed to consider the following particulars;

I. What is meant by one God and father of all.

II. What by one faith, one baptism, and one hope of our calling.

III. What by one body and one spirit.

IV. What by that expression of being called in one hope of our calling. And then,

V. In imitation of the apostle's example, (to these considerations) endeavour to add some excitements to a strict unity and agreement amongst ourselves, that so we may be able to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

I have already, in a former discourse, spoke to the first general head; and proceeded in the second as far as relates to one faith and one hope of our calling: I come now, therefore, to consider what is meant by one baptism, which may be included in my foregoing proposition, for the following plain reasons.

1. First, that as to those who had in the Apostle's days the opportunity of being by them baptized into this faith, and actually were so baptized, they in consequence were accepted as renovated Christians, or rather, new converts.

2. Secondly, that such who in future ages were baptized into the death of Christ, would be also made partakers of his resurrection, whether children or adults: the latter by their own proper assent, and the former by proxies who engag'd for them: and it is very reasonable, they should be admitted by this means as heirs of salvation, because such infants may be as actually said to receive Christ as a Saviour, as they could be accus'd of sinning in Adam: and as to those, who have never had the opportunity of being baptized, and yet whose minds are so disposed, that the Almighty knows they would embrace an opportunity, if they had it, they may be included in the universality of Christ's salvation, and may receive acceptance through him: for their case seems to be the same as that of the eunuch, whom Phillip met with as he was going from Jerusalem to Gaza, who, though he was ignorant before, yet shew'd a desire to embrace the true faith, and to be baptized too, as soon as it was offered to him. This

honest

honest eunuch, we see, meant well, for he was just returning from Jerusalem, where he had been to worship, and (as a proper employment after that duty) was reading, and no doubt reflecting on the prophecy of Isaiah, which Philip overhearing, (that he might the better discharge his duty as a preacher) took the liberty with this great *Æthiopian* plainly to accost him, and put the question to him, whether he understood what he read or not*? And here he mildly answered, how should I, except some man should guide me? and for his further information desired Philip to come into the chariot; which having done, he observed that he had open'd on one of that prophet's most material prophecies concerning Christ, and, in consequence, took occasion to preach to him of Jesus; which we are told had this glorious effect, that it wrought conviction in this great and (I doubt not) morally good *Æthiopian*, insomuch that he desired to be baptized into this faith, and thought there was nothing further necessary but water for his admission; for he said unto Philip as they went along, here is water: what hindreth me to be baptized†? But to shew there was something more than that form required, (where there is a capacity of judging) he said to him, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest‡; and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; upon which he was baptized.

Now had he not had this good disposition to receive the first offers of salvation in Christ, but had miss'd this opportunity, he might never have been

* Acts viii. ver. 30.

† Acts viii. ver. 36.

‡ Ver. 37.

been baptized at all. However, as he had this good disposition, supposing he had wanted an opportunity of being baptized, yet I doubt not in the least but that he would have been equally saved through Christ, who knew with what willingness he would receive this faith when offer'd, as now that he was put to the trial: only here was this difference as to himself, that he would not have been so well satisfied in his own integrity, as now he was: from all which I would infer, that where there is a readiness of will, there is for the most part either a suitable opportunity, or supposing none such granted, yet it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not||. From this example of the eunuch, I would take notice, that it is the duty of every parent to have their children baptized, as soon as may be, and a fit occasion offers; but that in case their death be so sudden, as not to admit of an opportunity, then to rest satisfied in their own intentions of having them baptized, and not to sorrow as those without hope*.

I would observe one thing more in regard to this honest Æthiopian's being admitted to a convictive faith in Christ; namely, that it was probable, that the promulgation of the Christian faith would receive an increase, from the influence which his conversion (joined to his elevated rank and station in the Æthiopian court) might have throughout the kingdom. What I would here insinuate is, that he might be permitted hereby to be a means of conversion to the unenlightened heathens, and might teach and convince

|| 2 Cor. viii. ver. 12.

* 1 Theff. iv. ver. 13.

vince them (who now thought there were gods many and lords many†) that there really was but one God, one faith, and one hope of their calling.

III. The third consideration from the text is, what is meant by one body and one spirit. The first is briefly that common earthly nature of which we are all compounded, that is, of the dust of the earth: and it may likewise regard our incorporated capacity, in which sense a number of people may be called a body: for thus the apostle says, they are one body, that is, they are joined together as such to profess a mutual faith. The meaning of one spirit also conveys to us the original of our diviner part, the soul, and acquaints us, that as to that we are also equal; for ye are one body and one spirit; therefore whether we are an emanation or participation of God's entity, or a more imperfect and inferior degree of spirituality, still whatever our spiritual composition is, we are all one: for God was not partial in his creative dispensation, in regard to our spirit, but in his own likeness he made us all, and hath likewise made of one flesh all the nations of the earth*.

IV. Fourthly, let us now consider what is meant by that expression of being called unto this one faith and hope of our calling. This seems particularly applicable to the persons St. Paul then wrote to, namely, the Ephesians; tho' I would understand it also in a more general sense and suppose it to signify the universal call, which (through the preaching of himself and his successors) would be made to all succeeding ages of the

† 1 Cor. viii. ver. 5.

* Acts xvii. ver. 26.

the world, which might be called hereafter, by the diffusive promulgation of the gospel: for if the scriptures are to be the rule of our practice, the epistolary portions of them may be applicable to us also, in these later ages, as they were unto them to whom he preached. St. Paul introduces this epistle in words, which suppose an election according to the purpose of God's eternal will; but I cannot think it to be a just inference from hence, that these Ephesians were so called into one faith, as to exclude the rest of mankind: no! the meaning of election here, I take to be also general, in respect of those, on whom the doctrines preached by St. Paul, or his followers, might so operate, as to give them a hope in believing; even as the eunuch was wrought upon by Philip; or that if there were any eternally elected to salvation, Christ could not come for their sakes, for there had been no occasion, but it must have been in order to put all others on a par with them, and thereby render himself an universal saviour, and redeemer of the human race.

And I would observe also, that a satisfactory consolation does not always attend faith, and that therefore this may (where it so happens) be deemed a kind of election according to God's purpose: for if a rational and assentive faith, were the only saving faith, what must become of those, who from the nature of their common employments, are absolutely incapable of attaining it; who have it not in their power to understand even what the word means?

What I chiefly apprehend to be convey'd to us in these words of being called, in one hope of our calling, is this,

I. First,

1. First, that the then new converted Christians were most immediately excited to lay hold on the doctrines, and most effectually induced to believe in Christ.

2. Secondly, that it was incumbent upon them, that they should propagate this faith in future ages, and spread these glad tidings of Christ's coming to reconcile the world unto God, in order to be themselves, in some measure, ministers of the mysteries of God in all places and kingdoms, wherever their proper and peculiar occupations and employments might disperse them.

3. Thirdly, that they were particularly obliged by Almighty God, and so far might be deemed elect, according to the purpose of his divine will, inasmuch as they had the immediate assurance of the truths delivered, convey'd to them by those who were eye-witnesses of the miracles, by which these truths were enforced; and not only so, but had it convey'd to them also by that great apostle, who himself had been not only a persecuting unbelieving Jew; but who likewise (when nothing else could prevail upon him) was forcibly convinced by a light from heaven. This seems to be the meaning of those words, called through Christ: now had the Apostle meant an uncontrollable election to salvation through Christ, then to those so called there would have been no occasion to have preached Christ at all, but it would have behoved this great minister of Christ to have gone further to the unelected, as well as to the

more unenlighten'd part of the Gentile world, since he peculiarly styles himself their preacher, and declares that he came to break down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile*. This also seems plain from his telling the Ephesians: you hath he quickned, who were dead in trespasses and sins†.

Now if so be, that they were dead in trespasses and sins, how could they be deemed the elect, in any other sense than that I have before mentioned; or upon supposition that they were originally elected, how could they be deemed dead in trespasses and sins?

The Apostle also at the 5th verse of the first chapter, calls it a predestination by adoption, by Jesus Christ; that is, they were the Gentile world, to whom the gospel was secondarily preached, and not the first chosen people of God: but when they rejected Christ, then he adopted these Gentiles, according to his purpose in Christ: and thus are they and we also called to one faith and one hope of our calling, and thus may those who at present are dead in trespasses and sins (I mean our modern Freethinkers) be also called to this one hope of our calling, by the preaching of God's ministers to them.

Thus I have explain'd (as well as I am able) the meaning of the words, one God and father of all, one baptism, one faith and hope of our calling, and have shewn in what sense we are to understand them. I have also shew'd, what is

* Ephes. chap. ii. ver. 14.

† Ibid. ver. 1.

meant by one body and one spirit, and what by our being called in this one faith and hope of our calling.

V. I come now, in the fifth and last place, to enforce the doctrine laid down by the apostle, as consequent upon this sameness of our natures and circumstances, namely, a strict harmony and union among ourselves, and such an universal charity, that we may endeavour in the bond of peace to keep the unity of the spirit.

1. First then, I observe, it is unity and peace that are here recommended, and I cannot but take notice that this duty is equally as necessary now to be inculcated as even in the apostle's days. Now, I say, when so much discord and so many divisions subsist among those who outwardly profess to be of the same faith, heirs of the same promises, and to have the same hope of their calling, The immorality of the age is too flagrant and notorious to be dissembled, and is one of the greatest seed-plots whence these differences arise; 'tis the lusts that war against the soul that occasion dissensions and confusions among us; for did we all of us strive (by good and virtuous lives) to keep the bond of peace, we should soon find the consequence would be an unity of spirit: had we true charity, we should mutually cover each other's many trifling failings, and reconcile the immaterial and unessential differences in our worship, of the same God and father of all.

And

And as these chiefly arise from the non-essentials, we should (were this catholic spirit in us) be led on all sides, in some measure to cede to each other; Ephraim would not envy, or enveigh against Judah, nor would Judah vex Ephraim*; but we should endeavour to give no offence (by insisting upon trifles) either to the Jew or to the Greek, nor yet to the church of God†, and by such moderation should at last prevail.

The passions and prejudices of men are so prevalent, the malignity of vice so coercive, that they ought to be continually qualified by moderate persuasion, rather than enflamed by violent exclamations; and we should on all sides strive to open such a door of conviction in our own breasts, as will induce us by the best representations, to win over those who differ from us, to that species of worship practised in the church of England, which (all things consider'd) appears better to quadrate with the most pure and perfect doctrine of Jesus Christ, than any other of the reformed churches.

I would, secondly, observe, that bulls, anathema's, menaces, and the like, are not rational means of conviction, and therefore cannot bring about an unity of spirit in rational creatures. Neither the fire of persecutions, nor superstitious bigotry, will ever so effectually prevail, as will the more mild reasonings of learned, honest, and well-meaning explainers of God's word and ordinances: nor would that church, who makes

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* Isa. xi. ver. 13.

† 1 Cor. x. ver. 32.

use of this direful, yet ineffectual means of conviction, ever succeed in her attempts, did she not grant indulgencies as well as bulls; and whilst, on the one hand, she curses whom the Lord will bless*, she, on the other, as injudiciously (for filthy lucre's sake) cries, peace, peace, where there is no peace†.

I call these methods unconvictive, because it cannot be supposed but where this strife is there will confusion be, and every evil work‡: there may be also (through persecution) a falling off from the faith||, which is worse than infidelity; for it is not every one can endure this fiery trial.

This is surely very different from that charity, that hopeth all things, and believeth all things§, thus to set up peculiar doctrines, unwarranted from scripture, unpractis'd by the apostles, unheard of in their preachings, and most arbitrarily so to give them the title of infallibility, as to pronounce damnation on all those who do not, nor can assent to or believe, and consequently cannot practice such doctrines. These are teachers that are not of God, and perhaps if they go on, may not be comprehended even in the all comprehensive salvation of Christ; who does not chuse to have his flock devoured by wolves, or that one of his little ones should perish§†.

But to bring this matter of unity, so necessary amongst Christians, a little nearer home, let us impar-

* Num. xxiii. ver. 8.

† Jer. vi. ver. 14.

‡ James iii. ver. 16.

|| 2 Theff. ii. ver. 3.

§ 1 Cor. xiii. ver. 7.

§† Matt, xviii, ver, 14,

impartially examine, whether we do not in some essentials, and many trivial unessential things give offence to those, who in themselves really mean to believe and practice the doctrines of Christ, as near the original purity of it, as we would ourselves†. Let us consider, if there really is no stone of stumbling, which may (without any damage to our constitutional church) be removed out of our weak brother's way: for weak I must term them also who separate from us, if it depends only upon those little formula's, which render our worship more agreeable to the beauty of holiness, then it would be without them. If there is any great obstacle on either side, let it be removed; if not, let the same uniting spirit, the same willingness to comply, bring them to assent to these things for decency and order's sake§, which are not sinful in themselves, nor any ways detrimental to them, in regard to the same hope with us of our joint calling in Christ Jesus: for tho' I have as much charity and love for the Dissenters, as they would wish me to have, yet I must acquaint them, that if there is no essential difference, they ought to yield to the constitutional church, as unto the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake†. Let us set the gates of our publick assemblies, as wide open as possibly we can, without sin, that the righteous of what denomination so ever may enter in thereat. Let us so follow peace with

† Athanasian Creed.
 Supscription to the 39 Articles.
 Test Ag.

§ Rom. xiv. ver. 13.
 | 1 ep. Cor. xiv. ver. 40.
 †† 1 Pet. iii. ver. 13.

with all men, as, if possible, to secure an alternate peace from all men to ourselves; which cannot be done, by widening the breaches and divisions, that through obstinacy or ignorance subsist amongst us. This peace and unity cannot be brought about, by insisting chiefly on the phylacteries of religion; but might be brought about, if we reciprocally would strive to reconcile them, and would never pass uncharitable judgments, or jealous surmises one upon another; nor ever limit the mercies of God, which are not by him limited; who declares, that in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him*. It might I say be effectually brought about, if instead of such a behaviour, we should be always ready to hope and wish for the salvation of the whole world: for as St. Paul saith, this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners†; not by the partial salvation of this or that sect, or of this or that elected one, but for a general, glorious, and all comprehending salvation of the whole world: for in him shall all the nations of the world be blessed, for this reason, because that God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth‡.

I would desire to add a remark or two to my foregoing discourse, which are,

1. First,

* Acts x. ver. 35.

† 1 Tim. i. ver. 15.

‡ Acts xvii. ver. 26.

1. First, that as throughout the whole I have endeavoured to inculcate the doctrine of a general salvation through Christ, and have declared how extensive the scriptures (in my opinion) have shew'd it to be, both in regard to those who lived before, at the time of, and since Christ; and that not to one particular part of the world, but to the whole universe: yet I say, notwithstanding this, I would have it remark'd, that it no way thereby does either excuse indolence in those, who have opportunity to try the reasons of their belief and of the hope that is in them, or the proofs offer'd to gain their assent; nor the least neglect of duty, who whilst they live in that neglect, may hope to be sav'd among the number of those for whom Christ died. Let it be remark'd,

2. Secondly, that revelation through Christ does not at all lessen, or any way invalidate the moral laws, and consequent duties, but is only an exemplification of them, and shews how much further we may extend our general notions and practices of good, than the world was apprehensive of, before this revelation; and that tho' Christ came to abolish the ceremonial or pharisaical part of rites and ordinances; yet he came to fulfill all righteousness, and to teach his followers to do the same. This I thought proper to premise before I concluded, which I now do, by begging, that the God of peace, which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, may perfectly strengthen

strengthen us, in a firm, right and true faith in him, and may teach us so to live in unity of peace here upon earth; that as we are all one body and one spirit; as we all have but one God and common father; as we have all but one general hope of our calling; so we may all meet together, and unitingly join in the great supper of the Lamb*; to praise God for this his great salvation in Christ Jesus, revealed to us in his gospel; and that as we are all heirs of the same promises in him, we may all be made partakers of the same rewards; and this our warfare on earth being ended, we may all conjointly with the whole world be made free denizens in the kingdom of God and his Christ. Amen.

* Rev. xix. ver. 17.



Sermon XIV.

On the uses of affliction, by way of consolation to a friend, on the loss of his wife and only child.

John, chap. xi. ver. 35.

Jesus wept.

SUCH is the goodness and compassion of our great creator, that he not only implanted in our natures, at our creation, those necessary passions, which, well governed, prove very beneficial to ourselves; but also endued us with a sympathy of nature, which leads us naturally to commiserate and bear a part in the afflictions and distresses, as well as pleasures, of our fellow-creatures. This sympathy of nature in us is absolutely necessary to the due performance of the social duties of life; for without that happy disposition, we should by degrees forget the duty we owe to our neighbours, which is never better performed, than when we take part in the burthens that oppress them. Without this mixture in our frame, we should be entirely self-absorbed, and should think of nothing but that which im-

mediately concerned our own particular circumstances; but prompted by this motive, we look upon every other, as it were, a second self, are as ready to enter into all their material concerns, and to have the same earnest desire to assist them, as if the case were our own. When our Saviour came in the flesh he came to take our nature upon him, and to be subject to all the calamities thereof, sin only excepted; and in consequence of this his divine intention, if we trace him thro' all the various scenes of his humanity, we may observe in him (to a great degree) this sympathy we have been speaking of, and may there observe the just effects it ought to produce. When the two sisters here in the chapter were in danger, as they thought, of losing their beloved friend and brother, they greatly griev'd thereat, sent to Jesus (who had in many instances shewed his compassionate disposition) to come and heal him, and used this prevailing argument to induce him to a compliance; he whom thou lovest is sick*. But, behold! before he was come, Lazarus was dead. And this he might permit to happen, to convince them, that no tie of relationship, or particular esteem, should render him partial, or make him more ready to come and heal him, than he would have been, had it been an utter stranger; as we see was the case in the widow's son of Naim, whom he accidentally met with as he was going to his grave†. Whether there was any particular friendship subsisting between this family and our Saviour (as it seems likely there

* John xi. ver. 3.

† Luke vii. ver. 12.

there was, by their message and other parts of the character) that made him come so speedily to their assistance as he did, I know not; but yet he chose to let Lazarus die, that his death might be, as he speaks, to the glory of God. He tells us he chose that method particularly, and no doubt but he did so, for it was equally easy to him, at a distance, to have said, I will, be thou healed*; or to have said to the sisters, Go your ways, your brother liveth: as the Jews seem to intimate in their question, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died†? This, I say, would have been as easy to him, as it was for him to have come personally to the grave to call him thence. But in this his proceeding, he offered a double motive to their faith, which he that knew their thoughts was sensible of: first, in his curative power, in this that his presence induced Mary and Martha to confess, that if he had been there, their brother had not died; and, secondly, in his resurging power, by that assentive faith with which she confesses him to be Christ, the Son of God, and thence concludes, that he could raise him from the dead.

As Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, or at most but two miles off, in point of time or for length of way, it is very certain Jesus could have come sooner than he did to their assistance; but then the purposed motive to faith above hinted would have been wanting; and we may be assured

* Mark i. ver. 41.

† John xi. ver. 37.

fured it was for no other reason but the glory of
 God, which prevented his giving them comfort
 sooner. We are told, verse 5th, that Jesus
 loved Martha and her sister Mary, and also La-
 zarus, and he could certainly give them no grea-
 ter proof of his affection, than by this exer-
 cising their faith in his will and power: and this
 affection which he is described to have would
 have induced him to have gone with haste to
 Jerusalem, had he not had a greater reason to
 prevent him; for that apart, the persuasions of
 his disciples not to go would have had no effect
 upon him.

It is manifest he took very much to heart the
 death of Lazarus, for when he saw the sisters
 weeping, and the Jews their friends weeping
 about them, he groaned in the spirit, and was
 troubled, or as the margin has it, troubled himself;
 that is, permitted his humane nature, as I appre-
 hend, to be so wrought upon, as to dissolve
 into a sympathetic concern, inasmuch as to shew
 the effect by weeping. Jesus wept. How ama-
 zing this! to behold the God of nature weep:
 but why wept he? it was, not only in compassi-
 on to the grieved friends, not only as lamenting
 the deceased Lazarus, but also as an example to
 us of compassion and sympathy; to shew us,
 that our passions were not given us for nothing;
 but that upon proper occasions, even the weak-
 nesses of our natures are so far from being cri-
 minal, that their overflowings and ebullitions are
 not unbecoming: for shall the Lord of hosts af-
 flict

lict us, (and that too in the tenderest sense, the loss of those that are the nearest and the dearest to us) and shall we not be grieved? Shall he send forth his scourge into the earth, and the earth not be moved thereby? No! certainly it is most fit and proper for us thereby to learn righteousness.

It would too much exceed the bounds of a single discourse, and not answer my present purpose, to go particularly through the whole history of the sickness and death of Lazarus; which, from these hints, every one who reads it attentively may draw much improvement: I shall therefore, after having observed some of the most material circumstances relative to this resurgent, confine myself to the more interesting occasion of this sermon, in regard to our deceased friends.

When Lazarus was sick, his relations (we see) seek for help; immediately they send to tell Jesus. Hence we may learn how much it is our duty to be found in the use of means. How indispensably we are oblig'd to do all in our power for the recovery of the sick. This was a duty also insisted upon by the wise man. When thou art sick (says he) send for the physician, for the Lord hath created him*.

When Jesus was acquainted therewith, he still kept where he was, for the reasons before cited. But this is not any way an example for other physicians

* Eccles. xxxviii. ver. 1.

physicians (who cannot now pretend to any other power of healing than that which study and experience gives) to neglect their duty as physicians, and thro' their indolence, apathy, haste, or covetousness, to make light of diseases, and be ready to send word, that the sickness is not unto death*: I say they ought not so to do, unless they were possessed of such a power as would (like our Saviour's) render their delay more conducive to the glory of God, and the good of their fellow creatures; which I believe none of them will venture to assume.

From the disciples fears of our Lord's going to Jerusalem, lest the Jews should stone him, and his answer, we may learn, that wheresoever a necessary duty prompts us, we are not to suffer needless fears, from the nature of the disorder, or any other cause, to get the better of our reason, resolution, good-nature and trust in providence: we must not cry out with the sluggard, there is a lion in the way†; but with our Saviour we must consider, Lazarus is sick, or our friend distressed, or fellow creature in misery, and therefore go, like him, to do our best towards our friend's recovery; and if when we have made use of the means, done all we can, we find them ineffectual, and that Lazarus is dead, as we have not in our power the gift of raising him from the dead, we should exercise the duties of patience and resignation to God's will, and like Christ in the chapter before us, make the death

of

* John xi. ver. 4. † Ibid. ver. 2. ‡ Prov. xxii. ver. 13.

of our friend turn some way or other to the glory of God: whilst he by his godlike power raises him from the dead; let us (as we cannot do this) endeavour to resign our friends into the hands of our faithful creator, with as much humility as we are capable of; that being the way whereby we may endeavour to promote the glory of God.

From the eagerness of the disciples to go with Jesus *, let us also learn a lesson of humility and self-knowledge; for we, like them, upon the first appearance of things are wont to be overcome, and in respect to our sick friends are apt to fancy ourselves ready to go and die with them; but when it comes to the upshot, and they must leave us, and we be parted for ever, we then are but too ready to forsake them, and flee; and instead of administering comfort to them in a dying hour, with the reconciling prospect of a happy immortality, we are apt to depart the room, and rather deprive them of what glimmering of comfort they can enjoy here, in our presence with them, than contribute thereby to give their last moments any mitigation. Some tempers indeed are so tender, some dispositions so soon wrought upon, that the armament and the apparatus of the king of terrors is very terrible, and though the spirit is willing, the flesh is too weak to undergo the shock of a departing friend. In such cases, where it is really constitutional, and not fancy, it is very excusable to withdraw, as the means of comfort cannot be received from, or administered by persons

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* John xi. ver. 16.

sons of so delicate a texture. But here I must observe, that frequent visiting the chambers of sickness, will in process of time not only habituate them to these gloomy scenes, but even render them in some measure useful to such as now view them with grief and horror.

When we, like Martha, hear of Christ's assistance approaching*, (or which is the same to us now, when there seems a blessing to wait upon our endeavours) let us with her also run out to meet it; that is, let us raise up our grateful and believing hearts to the giver of life, and humbly hope that (while the physician by his skill plants the necessary medicines, and we water with our anxious tears the dying friend) God will give the increase†: but if all this prove fruitless, and we must hear the unwelcome truth, that Lazarus is dead; still even then let us with the sisters in the gospel believe Christ to be the resurrection and the life‡. Let us rest satisfied, that though as to outward appearance he be dead and lost to us for the present, yet that God will raise him and us up at the last day, and that then he will be perfect, wanting nothing, ready to enter into the joys of our Lord§. Let our afflictions work in us a true faith in Christ: Let us watch to the end, and we shall, by a due observation, see why this happen'd unto us, and be able to trace, in God's most afflictive dispensations, a merciful and gracious father's hand; and that though he does not prove literally here the resurrection and

* John xi. ver. 32.
† 1 Cor. iii. ver. 6.

† John xi. ver. 25.
§ James i. ver. 4.

the life, by the continued life of our friend; yet
 he will virtually prove so, by either supporting
 us under our loss, and giving us life and spirit to
 sustain it, or else by raising us up other friends,
 whom we shall in a short time associate and be-
 come intimate with, and enjoy, in a great mea-
 sure, with the same complacency and satisfaction,
 as we did our deceased friends: for God declares
 himself the father of the fatherless*, the refuge
 of the distressed, and that he pleads the cause of
 the widow. And was not this the case, that in
 time we got over our losses, (though such a sup-
 position is for the present looked on as a paradox)
 the affairs of the world, and the remaining du-
 ties of our lives, would go unperformed, were
 we always to continue (as it were) to groan in
 the spirit, and be troubled †.

From the rash judgment of the Jews upon
 Mary's rising to go to Jesus, let us learn not to
 pass sentence upon a superficial view of things.
 They accused her of an unnecessary and unwar-
 rantable passion, such an one as even induced her
 to go, and pour out her overwhelming grief upon
 her brother's silent, deaf and unrelenting grave.
 She goes to the grave (say they) to weep there ‡;
 whereas she, on the contrary, was running in
 haste to meet him in whom she believed, and to
 apply to the heavenly physician, through whose
 power, when arrived, she hoped to have her
 brother restored to her again; since he did not
 please to exert it to prevent his death; and with

the very words of her sister Martha accosts him, saying, If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*.

After this thorough trial, at length the Lord of life arrives, with healing in his lips, and speaks to the deceased Lazarus, bidding him come forth†; then his having lain in the grave four days was no impediment to his rising again, but only a strong proof of Christ's miraculous power. For at thy sovereign mandate, O Saviour of the world, the grave gives up its dead, the dislocated bones resume their situation, and the putrifying, mouldering flesh becomes pure and perfectly restored: to thee, the great author of nature, our natures naturally obey: at thy all-ruling mandate the spirit returns, and in obedience to thine Almighty fiat, reanimates its forsaken clay. Let us learn then from Christ's example (whose Almighty power was as yea and amen) to lift up our eyes to Heaven, and return thanks to the father of spirits, for any divine assistance; for our being at any time heard, father, I thank thee, says Christ, that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always; and so we all know that God hears us always, and should therefore thence learn to be always upon our guard, and in whatever we do, make it out chief and constant aim, to do all to the glory of God, and render the words of our mouths, and the meditation of our hearts always acceptable in his sight, who is our strength

* John xi. ver. 32.

† Ibid. ver. 43.

‡ John xi. ver. 41.

§ 1 Cor. x. ver. 31.

strength and our redeemer, who is our resurrection and our life*.

Well might the Jews believe on Christ†, when they saw the miracles which he performed: well might the sisters rejoice in him who loved them, when they saw the consequence of that love, when they had by the efficiency thereof their friend restor'd, that brother rais'd again for their comfort, who perhaps had been in his life time, under God, their counsellor and protector; but tho' this is not the case with all relations lost, yet is there no age exempt from something attractive of love: how fast do the infant hands cling, and how tender is the sensation of their departure! how much more does budding manhood attract, when all the virtues spring forth without an allay of vice! then to behold them snatch'd from us, and grasped in the cold embraces of the grave, is like rending the very soul asunder, and blasting all our schemes of joy: for we then view them with aspiring hopes; and flatter ourselves that these dawnings of virtue will break forth into a perfect day of goodness, and ripen into all material qualifications, necessary to render them happy, both in their lives, and at their death, and ourselves happy in the possession of them.

But even in this, and under all afflictions, must we be calm and silent; we must sooner or later be resign'd, or sin: we may most lawfully

* Psalm xix, ver. 14.

† John xi, ver. 45.

fully give vent to our grief, and it would be Stoicism and not Christianity, to do otherwise. Our Saviour wept, and so may we, that being one of the innocent weaknesses of our nature, and may be, under due regulations, for a time indulg'd. If the death of our friends is sudden, we may bless God for it, so they are well prepar'd for it by the virtues of a good life. If they are carried off by a tedious illness, we may then have ground to hope, that to a good life, they may have added the proper and more actual preparation for their great change; and in either of these cases, we are not to sorrow as those without hope*, being assur'd that they are only ascended to our father and their father, to our God and their God†; at whose right hand they are now singing eternal hallelujahs to God and to the lamb for ever and ever; and perhaps too looking down with pity on us, to think how much we bewail them, when departed, not as their loss, but our own; whilst they are fixed unchangeably and unalterably happy, out of the reach of temptations to allure, and out of the power of vicious habits to subdue.

Thus have I endeavour'd to give a little descriptive account of the death of Lazarus, and of the uses in general to be drawn from it, and now come to speak to the too interesting subject of this discourse; the death of the person

* 1 Thess. chap. iv. ver. 13.

† John xxi. ver. 19.

† Rev. chap. v. ver. 13.

* 1 John xii. ver. 19.

son lately taken from us; but with what words shall I first accost you? who are so much more concern'd in her death than myself. How shall I endeavour to ease the weight of your affectionate grief, when that of friendship bears so hard upon myself? how shall I usher in the mournful theme? shall I endeavour to induce you to believe she is not dead but sleepeth, or shall I inculcate the words of St. Paul for your comfort and support? namely, that blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord, as they rest from their labours, and their works follow them*. I fear to expatiate on the charming innocent, either as to her person, heroic virtues, or refin'd endowments, lest I should raise that grief I would endeavour to suppress: shall I incite your thankfulness to God, inasmuch as you had so long the possession of her, or tell you the blessedness of those, who thus help to add to the number of the blest above? was it lawful for me, when I reflect on her great merits, as a good friend, neighbour, a worthy member of society, an example in religion, piety, charity; I would wish for your sakes, but not for her's, that I could have power to call her back again to your embraces; that I could restore her to you with all those delightful qualifications, for which she was so amiable, as hardly to leave her fellow; whilst even in youth her vivacity of genius led her soon to attain the knowledge of whatever she learn'd; her judgment which for her years was refin'd,

refin'd, enabled her to apply that knowledge to your comfort and her own good. Let me,

1. First use this following prevailing argument, that she is safe, in order to incite in you a resignation to God's will. It is finished as to her: she is now happy beyond imagination, and cannot sin. Nay, by this seemingly untimely death, she is at it were exempted from the general allotment of mankind, which is to be born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*; she is so much better off than the generality (who are reckon'd happy in their deaths, merely because they rest from their labours) that she is even exempted from any labour, and will yet be rewarded for it equally as if she had performed it as perfectly, as she doubtless would have done, had she been favour'd with a life of longer date. Consider,

2. Secondly, the sting of death is fin†: this her conscious innocence freed her from: she had not, nor could she have any apprehensions of an angry God: and deliver'd from that fear, what is there in death itself? what cause of fear can there be to that soul which is thus defended by the strongest and best of bulwarks, a good conscience? nay, I say further, how animating is the prospect of an eternity to that soul, whose hope (upon good grounds) is in the Lord his God†, who has fought a good fight,

* Job, chap. v. ver. 7.

† 1 Cor. xv. ver. 56.

† Psalm cxlvi. ver. 5.

fight, and has kept the faith*, and who on that account can with boldness hope, when he shakes off the fetters of mortality, to receive from God a crown of life, which fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens.

3. Thirdly, consider the general frailty of our weak natures, and thence conclude the possibility of her having been left to the wide world, in case of your deaths, a friendless and a helpless orphan, without a father or a mother, as skilful pilots to direct her, how to steer her course, in this tempestuous sea of life. And how eligible is death to such a piteous and forlorn, to such a mournful and unhappy situation!

4. Fourthly, consider the great hazard she might then have run and the difficulties she might have been involved in, without a possibility of your prudent checks, even to the least slip in any part of her future conduct; and this too under the sense of a large fortune, which young minds are apt to be intoxicated with, and carried beyond themselves: for tho' I think, she was as far as possible from any probability of this nature, yet under these circumstances, how can one be answerable for future contingencies, or be sure that such an event may never happen? and is not death preferable to such a hazardous adventure? supposing her on the other hand, to have liv'd

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under

* 1 Tim. iv. ver. 7.

§ 1 Pet. i. ver. iv.

under your immediate inspection: might not you perhaps have been mistaken in your choice for her, after all your foresight, wariness and circumspection? and might she not have been hereby unhappy in the most material of all alliances? but is she not, by this removal, safe from any fears of such a kind, and does she not hereby escape the very sorrow which you now labour under on her account, a sorrow (I persuade myself) to you much sharper than the pangs of death itself.

Take off your eyes a while from the tragical and more disagreeable part of the scene, and view her for a moment, as I do mine, in her exalted state: behold her as one of those children, of whom is the kingdom of heaven, her corruption will soon put on incorruption, and her mortality will soon be cloathed with immortality*. She is fled from her earthly into her heavenly father's arms, has quitted the pleasures of her numerous relations, to be placed in God's presence, where there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore§. Her noble mind, which here so eagerly aspir'd after knowledge, is now filled with wisdom, and her tongue now joins in the anthem of the angels, crying, holy, holy, holy Lord God, just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints†: she perhaps instead of being watch'd and tended here, is now appointed as a guardian

* 1 Cor. ch. xv. ver. 53.

§ Psalm xvi. ver. 11.

† Rev. xv. ver. 3.

iv. ver. 8.

guardian angel to those many relations she has left behind; and in such case, if she wants any completion of her bliss, it must consist in wishing them as happy as her self.

If we consider these great afflictions to us all in a general view, perhaps they are sent us for the improvement of our virtue, and to make us increase in those graces, which are yet wanting in our souls. Let then patience have its perfect work †, by helping us to sanctify these afflictions to ourselves, and to the uses whereunto they are sent, lest by slighting these messengers of God, we should provoke him to visit us with a repetition of his judgments. Let us by a proper behaviour, (whilst his rod is over us) induce him to stay his hand; to take away his plague from us, lest he vex us with all his storms.

It is a singular kind of affliction, with which we have been visited, but perhaps it is a mark of God's gracious love to us; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth* and this I feel and must allow to be a severe scourging: but yet I would believe it to be no other than an affectionate dispensation; and such an one as he would not have sent, did he not know us so prepared to receive it, as that we should out of this furnace of affliction come more pure; for as gold is tried in the fire, so are those whom the Lord loves, in the furnace of affliction§.

P p 2

Let

† Jam. i. ver. 4.

* Heb. xii. ver. 6. § Isa. xlviii. ver. 10.

Let us look upon it as the hand of God, and think not ourselves to blame in the least, or any way accessary (if we really are not so) to our friends death by neglect. Let us not (as is too common) strive to invent preventive possibilities, which till we saw the result, we really never thought of. If thou hadst been here, said both the sisters, my brother had not died; so we are ready to say, if such or such a thing had but been done, had this or that been left undone, it might have been better: yet let us not thus judge; but as we have done all we can, by applying to proper help, since it has not pleas'd God to bless the means; let us rest satisfied and patient with his fiat, and, with old Eli, resign ourselves up to him, and say, let him do what seemeth him best*. For the firmeth between the cherubims, be the earth ever so unquiet†, and what he pleases that does he in heaven and earth, in the sea, and in all deep places‡.

This heavy, this afflictive dispensation, is certainly right, or it would not have been inflicted: for the hairs of our head are all numbered§; and as not one of them falls to the ground without God's permission, so most certainly so great an event as this is not without the guidance of his superintendent wisdom.

The

* 1 Sam. iii. ver. 18.

† Psalm xcix. ver. 1.

‡ Psalm cxix. ver. 6.

§ Matt. x. ver. 30.

The prevalence of nature is very strong, and the passion of grief is of all others the most difficult to be curb'd; especially (as in the case before us) when reason itself would scarce attempt to check our fondness for her; whilst every sensible, every endearing article of her behaviour made her stick like birdlime to our souls. But still, the sinner she was to live, the sinner she was to die; and there is no doubt but sooner or later we shall see cause to kiss the rod that smites; tho' it is not to be expected till the first vents of this impetuous passion shall subside.

As there are many other grievous and heavy afflictions besides the instance of our friends death, so I would endeavour to inculcate this duty of patience on all whom it may have pleased God to afflict in mind, in body or estate. For the duty is the same, tho' the affliction is different, and I believe there are few, who by a due observation cannot see reason to bless the hour of their sufferings, at that time, when by a retrospection on their lives, they can plainly see it was necessary they should have been thus visited, and that they should pass through perhaps a seemingly barren wilderness to a land of plenty, and be led like Joseph to prison*, in order to their installment in a palace. The belief of a providence, and of God's superintendency is far from possessing the minds of mankind so strongly as it ought; and yet at as low an ebb as faith is at present, I believe it would abate of its standard, were there

no unforeseen and to us unaccountable accidents in life to happen, in order to make us look up to a first cause and governor of all things. We pass by the common mercies we daily receive merely because they are so common; but when any odd or rare phenomenon appears, we are foild to account for it, and then recur to God as to the principle from whom it is derived. The ambrosial manna, at the first appearance of it's balmy showers in the wilderness, made the travelling Hebrews eager to gather it, and that so greedily as to incur the displeasure of the donor, who saw it owing to the prevalence of their distrust; but when once it became common, and they had satiated themselves with it, they then forgot the Lord that made them, and had done so great things for them†: then there must be a new miracle, forsooth, to convince them of his providence, and a rock must be pierced for the quenching of their thirst, and to keep up in them a living faith in the continued mercies of God: all which I mention, to shew the necessity of afflictions and mercies being chequer'd and blended together, during our pilgrimage here on earth.

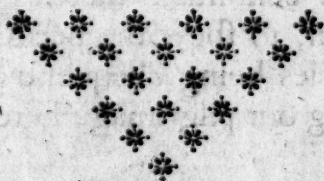
This plainly shews us, that we have no abiding city here, and thence infers a duty of seeking one to come, which is reserved in heaven for us‡, into which we should most earnestly strive to enter, tho' it be through the strait and narrow gate of trials and afflictions: for once arrived there, we shall be securely happy: sorrow and
fighing

† Psalm cvi. ver. 21. ‡ Heb. xiii. ver. 14.

fighing shall there be done away: grief and mourning shall be there no more: the afflictions of this life shall endure but for a night, and joy and happiness shall rise up in the morning of that eternal day, which never ends. May we all perform the necessary duties preparatory to our great change, that when the time of our departure shall come, we may have an entrance ministred to us abundantly into the joys of our master's rest||, through the merits of him, who is our strength and our redeemer, and who will be our resurrection and our life.

§ Isa. xxxv. ver. 10.

|| 2 Pet. i. ver. 11.



Sermon

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions in the various departments of the Government of the State of New York, for the year 1900.

23. 10. 1911

...not long enough for the one
...itself upon, nor the covering with
...below his name: but alas! this solution be-
...to worship him to the Divine Being, and with
...stand, as the word Providence implies, would be
...y supposing that to exist in subsistence of human
...ends (as it were) to compliment the Almighty,
...him to with his attention, and the other pec-
...an have only an outward, puntions to induce
...ne but to be content with it: whilst the one
...understanding, and how is the subsistence of
...low a possibility of the former with their own
...it, and in a more, without losing his name.
...at least, does not in the face, and both the
...to be true, in the presence of God, whilst
...or

Sermon XV.

God consider'd, as the sovereign disposer
of all things.

Prov. chap. xvi. ver. 33.

*The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing
thereof is of the Lord.*

IN vain may the Atheist deny the being, or
the Epicurean the providence of God, whilst
all nature stares them in the face, and both the
animate and inanimate world proclaim his name.
How inconsistent is the former with their own
understanding, and how vain is the subterfuge of
the latter to screen their infidelity; whilst the one
can have only his own wicked pursuits to induce
him to wish his assertion true, and the other pre-
tends (as it were) to compliment the Almighty,
by supposing that so exact an observance of human
affairs, as the word providence implies, would be
too troublesome to the Divine Being, and vastly
below his nature: but alas! this solutive bed of
theirs is not long enough for the one to stretch
himself upon, nor the covering wide enough for the

other to wrap himself in*; whilst they neither of them give themselves time to reflect on the nature of that perfect being, who can never be fatigued, but who is omnipotent and omnipresent, and no way subject to local motion, which would argue imperfection; nor on the nature of those beings whom he has created for his own good will and pleasure. For upon this supposition of theirs, what comforts them under affliction? what guards them from those dangers, which by the constituency of their nature they are incident to? what is it brings them success, and from what cause is it the contrary proceeds? who is it (think they) by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice†? whence flows the consciousness of ill, or what makes the virtuous mind approve itself? what but the reflection of an omnipresent Being, in whose sight they are? can this force be impelled by inert and inactive matter, or can blind indiscriminate chance bring it to pass? no, no! most certainly there is an infinite, eternal, self-existent Being, so wise, so just, so perfect, as most emphatically to be stiled the Ens Entium, or Being of Beings: and if so, it seems very unreasonable to suppose him a supine and indolent, a sluggish and inactive spirit, who takes no care of the works of his own hands: from all which, I would infer his particular guidance, superintendency and direction not only of us and our affairs, but even of all the most minute, and (to him) less valuable part of the creation. From the words now before us to be consider'd, I shall,

I. First,

* Isa. xxviii. ver. 20.

† Prov. viii. ver. 15.

I. First, explain the nature of the word lot, and shew how very ancient a custom it was, to refer to this way of deciding difficult cases.

II. Secondly, prove that all the lots of life are at God's disposal.

III. And, thirdly, consider the duty convey'd to us, by casting the lot into the lap.

1. As it implies our own endeavours to help ourselves.

2. And, secondly, as it supposes our trust in God.

I. The word sortes or lots, is a method of deciding dubious cases, where there appears no grounds for a preference, by referring the decision to the casting of a die, the drawing of a ticket, and the like. The most ancient lots were instituted by God himself, and in the books of the Old Testament* we meet with divers standing particular laws for the regulating the use thereof; and even in the New Testament, we are informed that the lot fell on St. Matthias†, when a successor in the apostolate was to be chosen, in the room of Judas. For the garment also of Christ himself were lots cast, in order to fulfil an old prophecy relative thereto§. There were various methods us'd for this purpose among the ancients: when the

Q q 2

Greeks

* Numb. xxvi. ver. 55.

Josh. vii. v. 14. c. xviii. v. 10.

1 Sam. xiv. ver. 41, 42.

† Acts i. ver. 26.

§ Psalm xxii. ver. 18.

Greeks consulted their oracles, it was by throwing sundry words or letters into an urn, and whatever when thrown out proved an arrangement of letters, they look'd upon as an oracular answer†: but as this was a very unlikely way ever to succeed, it was soon laid aside, by all but the most ignorant and bigotted populace: after this they had another method by opening some great and reputed author in an uncertain place; and whatever they met with serv'd them for an answer: nor indeed did this custom stop here, but was transmitted down to the times of Christianity itself: and it is known that of late years many people, in great difficulties and uncertainties, have had recourse to their Bible, and have open'd it to seek for a determination thence, which way to act by the particular chapter or verse they might first pitch upon; and this they look upon as an answer from God himself. This method they formerly called the *Sortes Sanctorum*, and in the usage thereof, some previously laid their bible on the table or altar, and pray'd to God that he would discover by it what was to come to pass: but this last method seems chiefly founded on the words of the text, and not without some grounds; for since we are told, that the lot being cast into the lap, the disposing there-

† Hoc (i. e. mundum effici ornatum, et pulcherrimum ex concursione fortuita) qui existimat fieri potuisse, non intelligo cur non idem putet, si innumera-

ut deinceps legi possint, effici; &c. Quod si mundum efficere potest concursus atomorum, cur porticum, cur templum, cur domum, cur urbem non potest? Quæ sunt minus operosa, et multa quidem facilliora. Cio, de Nat. Deor. l. ii. c. 37.

of is of the Lord; we may, I think, reasonably apply to God for his direction in any undertaking, and from hence may be led to seek his answer in those books, which were dictated by his spirit: so were the Jews of old directed to seek counsel by means of the urim and thummim. Thus in like manner they besought the prophets, begging of them to inquire of the Lord for them, whether they should or should not go out to battle, against such or such a nation, which in all appearance were greater and mightier than themselves; and the practice of seeking counsel, any other way but of God, either by his word or prophets, seems one of the crimes laid to the Israelites charge; Wo unto this rebellious house, who seek counsel, but not of me, saith the Lord*. And when they had offended the Almighty, by any particular crimes, he tells them by way of punishment, that he will not be sought of by them.

Thus much may serve to explain the meaning of the word, and to shew the antiquity of the custom of casting lots.

II. I shall now, secondly, prove, that the whole disposing of all the lots in life are of the Lord, and thereby endeavour to convince the Atheist of the impossibility of chance, being the ruling power in the various transactions and incidents of life. And this direction of the Almighty must appear evident, if we take into consideration the scripture account of things, wherein we shall

* Isa. xxx. ver. 1.

shall behold him sufficiently display'd in the character of a superintendent being; for who can follow Moses from the bulrush cradle unto Pharaoh's court, and think it chance-work? how can any one imagine, who reads his history with attention, that this leader of the Israelites was un-inspected, and unregarded by his maker through the various scenes of his life? who again can trace Joseph from the Ismaelitish pit, to the Egyptian court without owning, that he who led him like a sheep, observ'd him with a careful eye*? Upon making himself known to his brethren, he particularly declares his belief of this determination of events from God; for, says he, it was not you, but God that sent me here to preserve life†; and therefore he bids them not be angry with themselves, for selling him to the Ismaelites; and yet they, as free agents, were as much to blame for cruelty, as if God had not done it. Was it chance that shut the mouths of the devouring lions, and deliver'd godly Daniel from their fury‡? was it this blind principle that harden'd the fluid element for the Israelites to pass over, and again dissolv'd it as a punishment to Pharaoh and his host†? did this prevent the subtle fire from destroying Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the Babylonish furnace||? was it chance that so plentifully shower'd down quails and manna on the desponding Hebrews**, and prevented their garments from waxing old, through their

* Psalm lxxx. ver. 1, 2.

† Gen. xiv. ver. 5.

‡ Dan. vi. ver. 20.

† Exod. xiv. ver. 28.

|| Dan. iii. ver. 25.

** Exod. xvi. ver. 13.

their forty years sojourning in the wilderness†? was it this, that sent the fire from Heaven, and consumed Elijah's sacrifice, when the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal could not by their loud cries, importunate intreaties, and insatuated self-massacres, prevail on this their lifeless, chance-like god, to hear their prayers; and that too at a time, when every one of their lives (by agreement with the prophet) lay at stake, and depended on the success of their prayers‡? could chance direct the Syrian's javelin to the heart of Ahab*; or was it that, which preserved David from the the Philistines strength||? did chance open the prison gates for Peter§, or deliver Sisera into Jael's hands*‡? was this the author of all these and ten thousand more wonders mentioned in holy writ? no, surely! it was only that God, who is about our beds, about our paths, and spies out all our ways*§: it could be none but him, whose eye is in every place, beholding the evil and the good*||; and who having a general view to the happiness of his creatures, brings about the events of his providence, by means, which to us seem the most unlikely.

Let us take a little survey of the vegetable tribe, or carry our reflecting minds to the feather'd nations; and observe how useful, how pleasant, how delightful is every part of the former,

† Deut. viii. ver. 4.

‡ 1 Kings xviii. ver. 26.
ver. 28.

* 1 Kings xxii. ver. 34.

|| 1 Sam. xvii. ver. 50.

§ Acts xii. ver. 8.

*† Judg. iv. ver. 21.

*§ Psalm cxxxix. ver. 2.

*|| Prov. xv. ver. 3.

mer, and how amazingly wonderful are the actions of the latter? did chance clothe the fields with verdure, as knowing that tinge to be the most agreeable and best adapted to our constant view, or give the variegated colours to every flower of the field? does chance keep up that exact balance in every part of nature, that there should be of nothing too little, nor of any thing too much? can they by imputing them to this blind principle of unreflective chance, account for any of those actions which they perform in their incubation, nidification and migration from one country to another kingdom? was it chance invented that amazingly diversified fameness that is in the countenance and voice of all the human species? and yet how surprizingly beneficial this is to the good of the whole, is too obvious to need expatiating upon: nay the great fabric of the world itself scarce finds us stronger proofs of an almighty Agent's power, than does the most minute object in it: for what gives the elastic power to the grasshopper in its leap, or who is it furnishes the little flea with it's habergeon, or doth equip the mite with eyes, brain, mouth, stomach, entrails, &c*. in such exquisite perfection, but that God who also clothes the horse's neck with
thunder,

* Ubi tot sensus collocavit in culice? Et sunt alia dictu minora. Sed ubi visum in eo præ-tendit? Ubi gustatum applicavit? Ubi odoratum inseruit? Ubi vero truculentam, illam et portione maximam vocem ingeneravit? Qua subtilitate pennas

adnexuit? prælongavit pedum crura? Disposuit jejunam cavam, uti alvum? Avidam sanguinis, et potissimum humani, sitim, accendit? Telum vero perfodiendo tergore, quo spicula-vit ingenio? Atque ut in capaci, cum cerni non possit exilitas, ita reciproca

thunder, arms the rhinoceros with his coat of mail, and gives the great leviathan his unwieldy rowl? Let them account by what power it is these little creatures are enabled to resist the pressure of the atmosphere, and perform all the necessary functions of their natures, any otherwise than by resolving it into the assistance of him, whose power and ubiquity support the stupendous structure of many worlds*. Surely, we can't in the slightest manner attend to any even

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reciproca geminavit arte, ut fodiendo acuminatum pariter forbendoque fistulosum esset? Quos Teredini ad perforanda Robora cum sono teste dentes affixit? Potissimumque e ligno cibatum fecit: Sed turrigeros elephantorum miramur humeros, tauro-rumque colla, & truces in sublimine jactus; tigrum rapinas, leonum jubas, cum rerum natura nusquam magis quam in minimis, tota sit.—Vid. Derham Physico-Theol. b. 8. c. 1. p. 358. Ex Plinio.

* The minute curiosities, and inimitable fineries observable in those lesser animals, in which our best microscopes discover no boteh, no rude ill-made work, (contrary to what is in all artificial works of man) do they not far more deserve our admiration than those celebrated pieces of human art? such as the cup made of a pepper corn, by Oswald Nerlinger that held 1200 ivory cups, all gilt on the edges, and having each of them a foot, and yet affording room for 400 more, in the Ephem. Germ. T. i. ad-

dend. ad obs. 13. Such also was Phaeton in a ring, which Galen thus reflects upon, when he speaks of the art and wisdom of the maker of animals, particularly such as are small. Quanto, saith he, ipsum minus fuerit, tanto majorem admirationem tibi excitabit, quod declarant opifices cum in corporibus parvis aliquid insculpant, cujus generis est quod nuper quidam in annulo Phaetonta quatuor equis in vectum sculpsit omnes enim equi fraxum, os, et dentes anteriores habebant, &c. And then having taken notice that the legs were no bigger than those of a gnat, he shews that their make did not come up to those of the gnat; as also, saith he, major adhuc alia quaedam esse videtur ejus artis, qui pulicem condidit, vis atq; sapientia, quod, &c. Cum igitur ars tanta in tam abjectis animalibus appareat, quantam ejus vim ac sapientiam in prestantioribus inesse putabimus?—Vid. Derham's Physico Theol. b. 8. c. 4. p. 367. Ex Galen de usu part. l. 17. c. 1. fin.

the most minute of the works of God, without being carried into almost an enthusiastic rapture, as was the pious ethnical physician Galen, whose observations I have just cited.

Let us then who have these manifest powers of God exemplify'd to us, not only in our own frame, but in that of every other creature about us, employ (as he did) all the faculties of our souls and bodies in acts of praise to him; a neglect whereof must argue the highest ingratitude in us, who know that he made them all for our use and benefit. Let us not be so injurious to our own reason, so more than sottiſhly stupid, and so wilfully ignorant, as to attribute the finest fabric, that infinite Almighty wisdom could invent, to blind unruling chance, which never made any one thing, nor ever yet gave direction, in regard to the locality of a single atom*.

* Si pauca quis tibi donasset jugera, accepisse te diceres beneficium: immensa terrarum late patentium spatia negas esse beneficium? Si pecuniam tibi aliquis donaverit, — beneficium vocabis: tot metalla defodit, tot flumina emittit in æra, super quæ decurrunt sola aurum vehentia: argenti, æris, ferri immane pondus omnibus locis obrutum, cujus investigandi tibi facultatem dedit, — negas te accepisse beneficium? Si domus tibi donetur, in qua marmoris aliquid resplendeat, &c. Num mediocre

munus vocabis? Ingens tibi domicilium, sine ullo incendiæ, aut ruinæ metu struxit, in quo vides non tenues crustas — sed integras lapidis pretiosissimi moles, &c. negas te ullum munus accepisse? Et cum ista quæ habes magno æstimes, quod est ingrati hominis, nulli debere te judicas? Unde tibi istum quem trahis spiritum? Unde istam, per quam ductus vitæ tuæ disponis atque ordinas, lucem? &c. — Vide Derham's Physico-Theology, b. 11. c. 5. p. 433. ex Senec. de Benef. l. 4. c. 6.

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Is not the general opinion of mankind against these infidels, whilst whole nations come before the Lord as suppliants, and bow themselves before the most high God, to deprecate his judgments towards a sinful people? who (tho' laden with iniquity, unhappiness and misery, even so that the burden is in a manner insupportable) would pray in vain, would supplicate in vain, was there not a God who heareth prayer; forgiveth iniquity, transgression and sin. Again, do not afflictions also naturally send us to this almighty being for relief? Do we not then secretly own his power? Nay, and even amongst the prophane, do they not under the pressure of any afflictive circumstances even charge God therewith? Are they not (if I may so speak) angry with him in their hearts, and often petulant in their expressions too? And why this vexation, why this anger against God, if he is not necessary to the evils that befall them? which he cannot be, if (according to their own principles) he is not, as the one asserts, in being; or, as the other, disregards and takes no cognizance of the affairs of this lower world. Why do they thus charge God foolishly, if he is not the author of their woe? and if he be, how senseless, and how stupid is it in them to argue against his providence*, and pretend he

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does

§ Exod. xxxiv. ver. 7.

† Job. i. ver. 22.

* It was a pious, as well as just conclusion the ingenious Laurence Bellini makes of his Opusculum de Motu Cordis, in these words: De motu cordis isthæc.

Quæ equidem omnia, si a rudi intelligentia hominis tantum consilii, tantum ratiocinii, tantum peritæ mille rerum, tantum scientiarum exigunt, ad hoc, ut inveniantur, seu ad hoc, ut percipiantur postquam facta sunt; illum,

does not supervise the affairs of the world, that he does not dispose of the lot; and yet at the same time to urge, or at least own, their afflictions come from him?

Thus having proved the assertion, and, I hope, answered these cavillers, I shall pass on,

III. Thirdly, to consider what is meant by casting the lot into the lap; not in regard to the different usages and methods of doing it, which have already been described; but,

First, as it implies our own endeavours to help ourselves. And,

Secondly,

lum, ejus opera, fabrefacta sunt hæc singula, tam vani erimus atque inanes, ut existimemus esse consilii impotem, rationis expertem, imperitum, aut ignarum omnium rerum? Quantum ad me attinet, nolim esse rationis compos, si tantum insudandum mihi esset ad consequendum intelligentiam earum rerum, quas fabrefaceret nescio quæ vis, quæ nihil intelligeret eorum quæ fabrefaceret; mihi etenim videretur esse vile quiddam, atque ridiculum, qui vellem totam ætatem meam, sanitatem, et quicquid humanum est deterere, nihil curare quicquid est jucunditatum, quicquid lætitiarum; quicquid commodorum; non divitias, non dignitates: non pœnas etiam, & vitam ipsam, ut gloriari possem postremo invenisse unum, aut alterum, & fortasse me invenisse quidam ex iis innumeris, quæ

produxisset, nescio quis ille, qui sine labore, sine cura, nihil cogitans, nihil cognoscens, non unam aut alteram rem, neque dubie, sed certo produxisset innumeras innumerabiles rerum in hoc tam immenso spatio corporum, ex quibus totus mundus compingitur. Ah Deum immortalem! Video præsens numen tuum in hisce tam prodigiosis generationis initiis, & in altissima eorum contemplatione defixus, nescio quo cæstro admirationis conciter, & quasi divine furens cohiberi me minime possum quia exclamem.

Magnus Dominus! Magnus Fabricator. Hominum Deus! Magnus atque admirabilis! Conditor rerum Deus quam magnus es!—Vide Derham's Physico Theol. b. 5. c. 10. p. 312, ex Bellin. de Mot. Cord. fin.

Secondly, as it supposes a trust in God. And,
 First, it implies the use of our own endeavours. And this I mention, lest any one should run into the other extreme, and look upon all their actions as predestinated; which no one can do who considers, that altho' it is our duty by the help of second causes, to seek after happiness; yet we must not so rely upon things without us, as to think every thing will come to pass, whether we use our endeavours or not: the lot is to be by us cast into the lap, in order for our acquittance; that is, we must propose such schemes of life to ourselves, as we think upon our own cool judgment and reflexion will best answer the end of our creation, be most conducive to our own happiness, and tend most to the honour of God: but yet when we have so done, we must then patiently wait the event from the disposer of all things: we must not suppose that the laws of gravitation and attraction, will be suspended merely on our account; nor can we expect, that (in case we neglect to improve the present seeming opportunity) the dial of our lives should be protracted to give us any other*. Suppose a person dangerously ill, who being obstinate, would neither seek advice, nor use what medicines were prescribed him, in order to be cur'd, should die; would it not be laid at his own door, by the sensible part of mankind? is not such a behaviour inconsistent with a rational creature? certainly it is, and for this plain reason, that the not using medicines

* Isa. xxxviii. ver. 8.

medicines is, in effect, denying they were created for our use, or had such specifick qualities as suited the many different indispositions of our bodies; and to which they would prove antidotes upon a seasonable application made with skill and judgment*.

And this holds good, as to the moral conduct of ourselves, as well as to the active part of life. The wise man tells us there is a time for all things; which he largely enumerates in the third chapter of Ecclesiastes, and may be thus understood: that whereas to every thing there is a time, so the improvement of it is in our own power, during that proper time, meaning the different stages of life; and that if we do not act properly either for our selves or others, we thereby as it were neglect to cast the lot into the lap, and then God Almighty, without a miracle, cannot dispose of it to our advantage. To illustrate this further; suppose a good natural genius lies uncultivated and unimproved, by the neglect or thro' the mistake of parents, or the indolence of the person endow'd with it; a misfortune consequent thereupon cannot properly be charged on God; but our failing in this point, is only owing to the lot's not being cast into the lap; and we may as well expect to reap where we have not sown, as to expect that man to become conspicuous, or to make a beneficial figure in life (either for himself or others,) whose faculties have wanted the culture of education. So again, if the pilot guides the helm,

* See Ray's Hist. PL lib. 16. cap. 3. referred to in page 197.

helm, the ship may probably be brought safe into port; but if he be in a storm (which is one of the powers of nature from without us) and should quit the steerage, and only cry, Lord, help us, we perish; it must not be said, the wreck was a fatality, when it was most likely owing to his own neglect in not casting the lot into the lap, and exerting his own endeavours, which with the concurrence of God's aid and disposal might have been successful to the saving of his ship. Besides this duty is likewise incumbent upon us,

2. In the second place, as dependent beings, in order to shew our trust and confidence in God. We are to be found in the use of means, or else our liberty of action was granted us in vain. Commit thy way unto the Lord*, says David, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass: we are very apt to despair, when success does not follow upon our endeavours; but we should on the contrary rest in the Lord, and abide patiently for him, and then we may very likely be comfortably convinced, that the endeavours we exerted, and the means we made use of (provided we have made use of such means) were not only all that was in our power to do, but also the best and most effectual that could be pursued: we may (perhaps) by a retrospect on past events, be (after they are over) able to trace the natural progress of our success thro' them, and view the many intervening disappointments, as really so many steps in that ladder, by which we have gradually

* Psalm xxxvii. ver. 5.

gradually ascended to, and arriv'd at prosperity, and not as we look'd upon them, when present, as so many broken links, in our chain of life, or so many letts and hindrances to our success. We must consider ourselves so far dependent upon God, as to know, that tho' we have a liberty of action and rational powers; yet we have no absolute sufficiency (merely) of ourselves†, and consequently must rely upon him for support and aid in all extraordinary events, and must upon all emergencies apply to him to prevent us in all our doings by his most gracious favour, and to further us by his continual help, that so in all our works begun, continued, and ended in him, we may glorify his holy name‡; which is thus to be done, when we set about any good works, designed for the good of ourselves or others (which should always be the motive) the trust hinted at in the text, is a dependence on God's infinite wisdom for the disposal of the means to the end: in the continuance of any good work, it signifies a trust in him, that he will not permit any disastrous circumstance to overthrow a scheme so well planned and concerted; and in the end of our work, the trust suppos'd in the text is, a firm belief, that it was under the guidance and direction of his providence in a coinciding manner, tho' not in a despotic way: and happy is it for all those, who (from a consciousness of their having us'd their best endeavours) can have confidence towards God, not only as to this world, but the other.

The

† 2 Cor. iii. ver. 5.

‡ Collect after the Offertory.

The proper considerations arising from the words thus explained, are,

1. First, to fix in our minds awful and proper apprehensions of that great being who by his power and providence overrules all nature. And,

2. Secondly, to raise in us great thankfulness to him, that he (as our creator) was pleased so to destine our lot in the chain of beings, that we should be able in some measure, by the use of our faculties, and a due contemplation on the things which are without us, to comprehend his majesty, and trace out his eternal power and godhead†; and much more so, that he has formed us with such faculties, as are capable of improvement to all eternity; with souls bearing some resemblance to himself (at least enough to prove to us, that he originally formed man in his own likeness‡) and with such souls as can receive no adequate satisfaction, till they arrive at those mansions of bliss, which he has prepared, (not for such who here deny his being and providence, but) for those, who look upon him as their chief and only good, and who are not satisfied with the shallow and glimmering comprehension which they can form of him here, but who long (as it were) in consequence, to come and appear before the presence of their God*.

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This

† Rom. chap. i. ver. 20.

‡ Gen. i. ver. 27.

| * Psalm xlii. ver. 2.

This power which the Almighty has in and of himself, to dispose of all the lots and occurrences of life, should be a check against despair, even in the worst condition, in which we are placed; because he can make every seeming misfortune prove a real blessing, and can cause even our enemies to be at peace with us†. Fixt upon him, as the rock of our souls, we may rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation: let what will befall us, even tho' the hills were removed, and the rocks carried into the midst of the seas: and what but this dependance upon him, and a firm belief that all future contingencies were entirely under his direction, could have made the faithful Abraham, so readily obey the severest summons he could be called to, in the sacrifice of his only child||? what but a full trust in him could have animated the holy martyrs with such a willingness and alacrity, that they cheerfully laid down their lives, and resisted even unto blood, for the sake of God and his truth*? and this too against the rulers of this world, and in despite of natural prejudices, which they by their education had imbibed like other men.

Again, were we to look upon many aged persons, and desire of them a kind of historical account of their lives from their youth up; were we to ask them, what probable means of
sub-

† Prov. xvi. ver. 79.
§ Psalm xlv. ver. 2.

|| Gen. xxii. ver. 2.
* Heb. xii. ver. 4.

substance; they had for themselves or families, or what reasonable grounds they had to depend upon, to keep them from want, till they arriv'd at that great age; we should hardly find any that could give us reasonable satisfaction upon that head, without having recourse to the providence and protection of that God, who feedeth the young ravens, when they call upon him†. And if they cannot do it any other way, is not this a tacit acknowledgement of his superintendency, and a proof irresistable of his love to and care for his creatures? It likewise is,

3. Thirdly, a motive to humility, and a monitor to us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think in an advanced estate||, because we are all under the power of the Almighty, who setteth up one and pulleth down another‡; and who can reward the proud according to their deservings, and convince them that it was only he who made one man to differ from another, as surely as he made one star to exceed another star in glory§.

It is a truth which nothing but experience could make us believe, that infidelity is oftener to be met with in persons of the clearest comprehensions, and amongst those, who have made the strictest researches into nature, than amongst the less knowing. But that is, because
S f 2 their

† Psalm cxlvii. ver. 9.

|| Rom. xii. ver. 3.

‡ Psalm lxxv. ver. 7.

§ 1 Cor. xv. ver. 41.

their searches have been more metaphysical than religious, designed more to shew their own speculative genius, than any way to advance the honour of God. It was not so with Galen, with Pliny, or with Cicero, those worthy religious heathens, whose laudable examples half the present race of Christians would do well to transcribe into their own characters. It is a seeming paradox that ignorance should be the mother of faith, and knowledge too often the reverse: we do indeed sometimes see the honour of God and his wonders of providence, vindicated and proclaimed by the wise and good, whose minds are set not upon sceptical enquiries only, but who strive to search and see, that they may be able to tell the works of the Lord, and shew forth all his praise, that they may extol him for his goodness, and declare the wonders he doth for the children of men*.

We are very apt to admire any new discovery, or conquest made in any philosophical science, and cry up the author as a prodigy in nature; without looking any further, or tracing the hand of God, in the display of this power made by his creature; whilst the good and humble discerners himself reflects, how very often he has found himself foiled and baffled in his inquiry, before he could arrive at any degree of certainty; and is thence convinced how frail and weak the unassisted nature of man,

* Psalm cvii. ver. 31.

man is: and of course he carries his grateful thoughts up to the fountain, whence that knowledge flowed, which help'd him in the conquest, and adores that Being who gives such power to man†.

There are none improve the rational faculties more; none act more consistently with their being, than those do, who employ all the leisure they have from their necessary occupations, in contemplations of God, and the things that are made, which I could wish, we all did to the best of our powers and capacities; that so we might induce God, here to cast our lot in a fair ground, and give us the possession of a goodly heritage†, and hereafter make us partakers of that eternal rest, reserved for the people of God‡. Amen.

* * Those who would see more on the subject, particularly hinted at in this discourse, would do well to peruse Dr. Derham's Astro-Physico Theology, and Ray's wisdom of God in the creation, wherein they will receive much light from those two pious observers and contemplators upon the works of God;

* Matt. ix. ver. 8. * Psalm xvi. ver. 6. † Heb. iv. ver. 9.

man is: and of course he carries his grateful
thoughts up to the fountain, whence that know-
ledge flowed, which held him in the con-
quest, and shows that being who gives such
power to man.

There are none improve the natural faculties
more; none so more consistently with their be-
ing, than those do, who employ all the leisure
they have from their necessary occupations, in
contemplations of God, and the things that are
made; which I could wish, we all did to the
best of our powers and capacities; that so we
might induce God, here to cast our lot in a
his ground, and give us the possession of a
goodly heritage; and hereafter make us par-
takers of that eternal rest, reserved for the
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will receive much light from those two great
observers and commentators upon the works
of God.

† Matt. ix. ver. 8. * Praise ye the Lord.

Sermon XVI.

The necessity of Christ's suffering, in order to the spread of Christianity.

John, chap. xii. ver. 32.

And I, if I be lift up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

MANKIND by the original transgression of our first parents, were in their natures render'd impure and sinful, and have through all succeeding generations added thereto, by their own manifold misdeeds and vicious customs, insomuch that they have long since forfeited any claim, or merit to our Creator's favour, any hopes of enjoying either a heavenly or an earthly paradise; and as such must have been entirely miserable in their natures, had it not pleas'd God in his infinite mercy, to have found out such a satisfaction, as he himself thought proper to accept of; for and in lieu of a sinless and perfect obedience (requir'd of our first parents in paradise, and afterwards also under the mosaic dispensation) on the part of man; who was himself

himself no way fitted, to be a mediator for the world's transgressions, or a satisfier of God's anger'd justice on account of sin: for this glorious purpose, he in the fulness of time sent his son Jesus Christ the eternal and ever blessed companion of his infinite and unbeginning existence, that in him and through him, he might consistently with all his attributes be reconciled to the world: and in order thereunto this his son came in the flesh, and was clothed with our nature to accomplish the work: he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*: he came not as an avenging tyrant, in the pomp and grandeur of an earthly potentate, or despotic monarch; but in the humble state of a dependent creature, clothed with human nature and all the innocent infirmities thereof; laying in a manger, riding on an ass, and without a place, where to lay his head†: he came as was written of him to fulfill all righteousness‡, that by his so doing, God's anger against man might be appeased, and that in him and thro' him, the world (which before was left under the curse of their sins and vices) might be washed, might be sanctified§, and might be in fine reconciled unto God: to this end, we may trace him, through all the passages, through every circumstance of his immaculate and blameless life, even from his cradle to his cross, and find it nothing else, but a fulfilling all righteousness, and every prophecy in the old testament concerning him.

The

* Heb. ii. ver. 16.

† Matt. viii. v. 20.

‡ Matt. iii. ver. 15.

§ 1 Cor. vi. ver. 11.

entering on his ministry; yet I think it absolutely impossible, because unnecessary, that the opinion of Socinus should at all take place here, viz. that he was taken up into heaven, and there instructed in all things which he was to do and teach in order to man's salvation: this hypothesis may do well enough for a deluding Mahomet, but can never be a characteristic agreeable to that word which was in the beginning with God†, and therefore could not want to be taken up into heaven for any new instructions.

At his entering upon his ministry, he quits every other business whatsoever, and confines himself to the employ of a physician both to the bodies and souls of men: to the one, by the miracles he wrought for their cure, and the other by the doctrines he taught for their conviction. And in the chapter before us, out of which the text is taken; we are told, that as he was riding to Jerusalem, he was followed by some of those, who had been witnesses to the late miracle he wrought in raising Lazarus from the dead; and which also raised the curiosity of some Greeks, who were come to worship at the feast, that they also might see him; which is the more remarkable as we are told, that the appearance of Christ, (in the manner he should appear) would be to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness*! but alas! how shall we describe the consequence of

† John i. ver. 1.

* 1 Cor. i. ver. 23.

of this enquiry? when the disciples Philip and Andrew (glad to convey to their master the news of the Greeks desiring to see him) go to tell him of it; instead of Christ's looking upon it (as they no doubt did) as a kind of earnest of the Greek's willingness to be converted, his interpretation of their curiosity was; that the hour was come, when the son of man was to be glorified; which is explain'd to be spoken of his death in the next verse under the simile of a corn of wheat, which doth not bring forth fruit, except it die. The hour is come, says Christ, when the son of man shall be glorified: and a joyful hour would it indeed have been, had either the curiosity of the well meaning Greeks, or the return of some few repenting convicted Pharisees been of force enough to have render'd the embassy of a mediator sufficient to have redeemed the lost world without his death. But alas! vain were these ways to satisfy eternal anger'd justice against a whole world; which could be effected by no way, but that foretold by the prophet Zechariah, that the righteous branch of the house of David must be cut off*; it could not be compleated, till the son of man was lifted up, which he spoke of himself, signifying what death he should die: sensible of which, our Saviour expresses himself (with the most earnest desires of his human nature) that he might be saved from this hour of his tribulation, altho' it was that also of his glorification; and in consequence he prays also to his

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heavenly

* Zech. xiii. ver. 7.

heavenly father, O father, save me from this hour; at the same time subjoining, that for this cause came he to this hour†; and then prays again, O father, glorify thy name‡; that is, as if he had said, since it was indispensably necessary for the satisfaction of thy anger'd justice against sinful man, that I who was the only proper satisfaction, should come to this hour, so glorify thy name herein, that my human nature may not so far prevail, as in the least to weaken the errand of mercy on which I came, or any way to invalidate the blessedness intended unto poor lost mankind thereby; to which he was answer'd by a voice from heaven (which some took for thunder, and others for the voice of an angel) assisting him, that God had glorified his name, and would glorify it again§; the consequence of which second glorification was, that the prince of this world was to be cast out|| (that is the devil) and his infernal power was to be subdued, and that dominion which he had so long possessed over the minds of men was now no longer to subsist. He was no longer to rule by his insinuations, no longer to give a stupifying relish to all the pleasures of sense: for now was grace and truth come by Jesus Christ*; and grace is offer'd to every believing and returning sinner, and truth sufficiently exemplified, to render the wiles of satan very apparent to all who who are not wilfully

† John xii. ver. 27.

‡ Ibid. ver. 28.

§ Ibid. ver. 29.

|| John xii. ver. 31.

* John i. ver. 17.

wilfully blind, who will not obstinately give themselves up to believe a lie*, or to believe the truth in unrighteousness†; that is, so as to cleave to that part of duty, which suits their inclinations; but depart from that, which contradicts some favourite passion, or some darling lust. How the prince of this world was to be cast out comes now,

I. First, under consideration, and this was to be by the death of Christ, signified by the expression of lifting up. And,

II. Secondly, the consequence of this, the drawing all men thereby to him; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. Which two propositions shall be the business of my present engagement; and then shall conclude with some seasonable reflections upon the whole.

I. First then, I am to consider that the son of man was to be lifted up. It appears very plain, from all the prophecies of the Old Testament and from the general expectation of the whole world, that there was to be a reconciliation between God and man; which expectation was satisfy'd by the suffering of the man Christ Jesus. And it is equally as plainly foretold by very particular description, that in the year of the world in which our Saviour was crucified, some one was to die for the people, and that the whole nation

* 2 Thess. ii. ver. 11.

† Rom. i. ver. 18.

nation perish not; as was confess'd by Caiaphas, who was high-priest, and consequently prophet that year: and altho' perhaps the Jews had too confin'd a view in this, and thought that it related only to themselves; yet we can see further into this great salvation, and discern that in Christ, and through his merits, salvation is offer'd unto all men*.

o This doctrine, however true, did not relish with the proud Jews, nor could it be digested by the wise Greeks. They could not trace a crucified redeemer, nor the lamb slain from the foundations of the world †, in those characters severally given of him, of prophet, priest, and king. They were then in continual fear of being overcome by the Romans, and subjected to their despotic yoke; and in such a dilemma, conceived no other notion of a mediator, than that of a temporal prince, who would live and reign among them till he had put all things under their feet; till he had reinstated his once chosen (though now distressed) people, and made them a terror and a name of admiration to all the nations round about them: and as they were disappointed herein, they became infidels both in theory and practice. The most convincing miracles, the most punctual and exact accomplishment of all the ancient prophecies (which they themselves knew, and own'd to relate to the Messiah, whose advent was at this time expected) were to them thus prejudiced, no arguments of

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* Heb. v. ver. 9.

† Rev. xiii. ver. 8.

his Messiahship at all: and though from the miracles he did, some of them were led to believe it hard even for the Messiah himself when he came to do greater †; yet they would not be entirely persuaded, and were soon laughed out of their faith, by the incredulous learned, when they deridingly ask'd them, Have any of the priests and rulers believed on him §? Nay, others there were among them, who ascribed his miracles to the power of devils, saying, He casts out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils ||: so that at the end of his ministry, when, by his life, he could give no further proof of his Godship and Messiahship, consistent with the scheme of man's redemption, or without offering violence thereto; when by the most glorious example of sanctity and holiness, he could not draw any after him; in order that he might draw all men unto him it was necessary he should be lifted up: it was requisite that he should be deliver'd into the hands of wicked men to be crucified and slain. For in vain had been all the innocency of his life, and in vain all the miracles he wrought; in vain the hardships he underwent, his praying in the garden, and his sweating drops of blood from his agonizing temples; in vain the display of that charitable power, by which he healed instantaneously the high-priest's servant's ear, which his zealous disciple had cut off; in vain his monitory look on Peter, when the voice of the alarming cock reproached him with his ingratitude, and extorted from him a confession of his guilt, in streams
of

† John vii. ver. 31. § Ibid. ver. 48. || Mark iii. ver. 22.

of silent penitential tears. For thus convinc'd, he went out and wept bitterly. Nay, in vain had been his own justification made to Pilate in the judgment hall, or even his promise to the penitent thief upon the cross; had he not himself at last yielded up the ghost in order to accomplish the important end of man's salvation. This was the only way, whereby he could draw all men unto him: and upon this, the centurion who attended, and they that were with him immediately cried out, truly, This was the son of God*. And herein was conviction indeed! all nature as it were convulsed: for at this great event the inanimate world reproaches faithless man: the vail of the temple is rent in twain, the earth shakes, the rocks rend, and the yawning graves give up some of those, who (tho' they had not seen him in their lives, yet) believing on him, with an eye of faith, arose with renew'd bodies, and appear'd to testify, that this was he, who should have redeemed Israel: it was the determin'd purpose of the Saviour of mankind, by some means or other to draw all men unto himself; and as nothing else would avail, this was resolved upon, and in the fullness of time, God sent his Son†.

The son of man was lifted up; which words in the text may also allude to his being raised to the most exalted seat in heaven: it may have reference to his resurrection and ascension, whereby he so fully prov'd his divine nature and mission, that after he had suffer'd death upon the cross,

* Mark xv. ver. 39.

† Gal: iv. ver. 4.

cross, he by his own power resuscitated from the grave, before his body had seen corruption; and by his omnipotent fiat commanded the cloud to come down and receive him out of the sight of the infidel spectators, as leaving his own faithful followers this additional convincing proof, that he was really the Messiah: and can there be any doubt left of his being such, who had been the author of these great events? is all nature then subject to him, and shall obstinate, obdurate man alone, whom he is striving to convince, shall he (I say) alone remain, hardened, inflexible, and unbelieving?

This may serve to shew one way, whereby the prince of darkness is to be cast out; and that, in order to his being so, the son of God (incarnate) was to be lifted up: I shall now proceed to shew,

II. Secondly, how he was by this means to draw all men unto him, as the most effectual to this end? and this will appear,

I. First, from the conviction it wrought upon the apostles themselves, who perhaps till then had but a staggering faith in Jesus. But this invigorated them with strength and resolution in the prosecution of their ministry, even to such a degree, as to suffer persecution and death for his cause. Our Saviour was render'd lovely and amiable to them, by the methods he took to instruct them, and also by his general behaviour

and conduct towards them; insomuch that it became necessary for him, (in order to make them bear quietly the unwelcome truths of his death and passion) to lead them to the belief of it gently, and by degrees, and be often forewarning them of it; which we find him doing by many parabolical expressions, one in particular, where he says, I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now*. And even all this caution of his was little enough; for they could no way relish the parting with their leader, their shepherd, their guide and their protector: they look'd upon it as absolutely necessary for them, to have it in their power to follow him, who was the way; to be protected by him, who was the true shepherd; to be guided and conducted by him, who was that light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world†, and in whom was no darknes at all; Jesus seeing this, promises them at his departure to send them a comforter§, who should lead them into all truth, should sanctify them throughout, and so effectually draw them to a firm belief, both in the truth of and the necessity for a crucified redeemer, that they themselves might by their ministry, after his departure from them, be able to go on with this divine work, drawing all men unto God. This appears;

2. Secondly, the most effectual method; inasmuch as the obstinacy of the Jews wanted the strongest possible proof, to induce them to believe:

* John xvi. ver. 12. † John i. ver. 9. § John xiv. ver. 26.

lieve: and we see that the centurion held out in unbelief, till he saw the agonizing Jesus give up the ghost, but then confesses with a declarative expression, truly this was the son of God. Again, the predictions of Christ in the Old Testament were not in every respect fulfilled till he was thus lifted up. He could no other way work upon the minds of the stubborn Jews, and therefore it was necessary, or as he speaks of himself, it needs must be, that the son of man should be crucified and slain*, tho' the consequence was a vindictive woe to him by whom he was betrayed. We are told also, that it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory†, (or which is the same thing in drawing many after him) to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. This seem'd a strange way of drawing all men to him, seeing the great aversion human nature in general has to suffering. It astonish'd those Jews, who expected to be drawn by him, under the conspicuous attractives of grandeur and honour, to find it must be by suffering, by death, and by self-denial; that instead of attending in a pompous cavalcade, on a diadem'd ruler, they must follow him unto prison, unto death, and to a crown of thorns: it seem'd also very amazing, to his disciples themselves, to think of this end of their lord and master; we have heard, say they, that Christ abideth for ever; how sayst thou then, that the son of man must be lifted up‡: who

is

* Luke xxiv. ver. 46. † Heb. ii. ver. 10. ‡ John xii. ver. 34.

is this son of man? it greatly shocked the descendants of the ancient Hebrews, who had always been taught by their leader Moses and the positive institutions of God himself, (when first the Levitical laws were promulg'd) to have an utter abhorrence to bloodshed, even so as to shudder at the thought of shedding human blood: it astonish'd them, I say, to find afterwards commands come from the same God of a quite contrary nature, and to see that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins*: and this seeming contradiction makes it strange to conceive, how it should become God, in order to bring many souls to righteousness, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; which can no other way be reconciled, nor the mystery of a God expiring any otherwise be cleared up, than by turning our eyes unto Jesus of Nazareth, that lamb slain from the foundation of the world†; who was thus to be lifted up, in order to accomplish the bloody types, and on purpose to bring many souls unto God, by thus drawing them after him. As a fuller answer hereto, let it be observed,

3. That it was necessary at that time, i. e. during the Jewish theocracy, and all preceding times, when the hearts of men were so very obdurate, to mollify them by all possible means; to give them an abhorrence to every thing resembling cruelty, by positive prohibitions from animal food; but it was likewise necessary, that this

* Heb. ix, ver. 22.

† Rev. xiii, ver. 8.

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this lamb slain from the foundation of the world, when the fullness of time was come, should accomplish all those types, which were relative to him; in order whereunto, it became him thus to be lifted up; that we by looking up to him as the author and finisher of our faith*, should have the diseases of our souls healed; even as the Jews by looking up to the typical serpent in the wilderness were to be cur'd of their bodily disorders†. Again justice and mercy were to coincide, and every attribute of the divine Being was to correspond without any clash or infringement on each other; and it became the redeemer, in order to draw the infidel world after him, to be thus the captain of salvation to all such, who were to be brought to righteousness through him. Infidels there are many now, but more there would have been, could they really have found any flaw in the scheme of our redemption: but in this dispensation, mercy, I say, and justice are met together, perfected and satisfy'd; justice or truth, by the punishment due to man, being laid on Jesus; and mercy by the pardon of our sins, in virtue of, or consequent on his sufferings, being granted to us. Righteousness and peace also have kissed each other‡: the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, and thereby the peace of wretched desponding man being fully secur'd, who may now surely be said to be drawn unto God, by the lifting up of the son of man from the earth; and I, if I be lifted up

* Heb. xii, ver. 2. † Numb. xxi. ver. 9. ‡ Psalm lxxxv. ver. 10.

up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

4. Fourthly, it became God, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, to make Christ, the captain of our salvation, perfect thro' sufferings, and us in him, by thus reconciling the world unto himself. If we consider the words, by whom are all things, separately, we may acquiesce in the supposition, that God Almighty, who made us at first, might justly destroy us, for rebelling against him; but if we consider, that all things were not only made by God, but for God too; then we see great reason why he should continue the glorious scheme of our redemption; for we cannot suppose that that God who made nothing in vain, should rest satisfied in the death and annihilation of that part of his creation, which alone (angels excepted) were endued with powers of praising and adoring him for ever, with powers of contemplating him here, in his works of creation; and thence, by the things that are seen, tracing out his eternal power and godhead*: and therefore as man had fallen, in order to preserve that part of God's rational creation, it was necessary to admit him, by some means or other, to a reinstatement in that happiness, from which Adam by transgression fell: this was done by the son of man's being lifted up: this was effected by that mystery of godliness, amazing to angels, inconceivable to man, God manifested in the flesh, to destroy the works of the devil†.

I now

* Rom. i. ver. 20.

† 1 John iii. ver. 8.

I come now, lastly, to make some seasonable reflections on what has been said, and so conclude. And,

1. First, it appears plain, that without the lifting up of the son of man, there could have been no salvation for lost mankind; no fulfilling the ancient prophecies; no proper satisfaction given to God for the transgressions of a sinful world; nor any incitements to faith, hope or charity, which include almost all the duties of a Christian: for we could not, after the fall, and the curse of man consequent thereupon, have believed or hoped for salvation, without The Word himself had declar'd it to us: had he not died, we had been yet in our sins, still liable to the punishment of them; and as to the duty of charity, we could have had no incitement to that or any other of the social duties of life, when we must have done them for God's sake only, and had no assurance of a reward. But now, that the day-spring from on high hath visited us*, we are assur'd, that no act of kindness, charity and benevolence shall go unregarded; no nor even the gift of a cup of cold water for God's sake, lose its reward†. This makes it,

2. Secondly, very clear and plain, that this method of providence was the only one proper and likely to draw all men unto God. And it is to be hoped, that though the Son of God (when sent to those husbandmen the Jews, who were first

* Luke i. ver. 78.

† Matt. x. ver. 42.

first to have been enlightened and saved by his coming) was rejected; it is, I say, to be hoped, that he will not meet with such treatment amongst us, who profess to believe in him. Let us rather be drawn to, and willingly run and meet him in all the ways of his providence and our duty. Is he the captain of our salvation, and shall we not observe the discipline of his commands? Was he lifted up on the cross, and died the death of a malefactor, and shall we not endeavour to ascend up to him by holiness of life? Shall we not awake from our sleep in sin, and arise from the death-bed of iniquity, that he may give us life? Yes! surely we ought so to do, and as an incitement thereto; let us,

3. Thirdly, reflect for a moment on the sentence passed on our first parents in paradise; In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die; that is, be subject to death by the weakness of your nature. Observe here, that this is an irrevocable sentence, from which there is no appeal; in which there is no room left for alleviation; no space given for repentance; no terms of salvation offered, but that very distant prospect, included in the promise made to Adam, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. And what, I beseech you, would have been the miserable condition of fallen man in this case, and under these circumstances, born rational, free and perfect: rational enough to praise and adore his creator, and to meditate on
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† Eph. v. ver. 14.

§ Gen. ii. ver. 17.

|| Gen. iii. ver. 15.

all his wonderful works; free, so as to use his own liberty*, and yet liable to sin; and sufficiently perfect in his nature and intellects, to have done the will of his maker to his full satisfaction; had he not yielded to those temptations, which were before him only as trials to his virtue, and which were, by due reflection and consideration, absolutely in his power to have resisted. The perfection of man's estate at his first creation, is, and has long been the foundation of many cavils, and therefore, in order to prove my assertion of his having been created perfect, I shall offer the following reason: Would any good man make his child less perfect than he could help§; would he, if he had the framing of his mind, allay it with bad principles, or impaired faculties; would he strive to entail upon him weak health, and a bad constitution, if it were in his power to do otherwise; would he, in any respect, try to debilitate him, either as to the frame and temper of his mind or body||, or both? And if a good man would not do this, why should we suspect it of the good and gracious God, and father of the universe?

Let the consideration of our first estate fill our souls with the warmest gratitude to our adorable Saviour, who was thus lifted up on the cross, that he might thereby draw many after him; and don't let us endeavour to cavil away our sal-

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vation,

* Yet free to fall. made to stand,

Milt. Par. Lost.

§ Vide Seed in locum.

|| Matt. vii. ver. 11.

vation, by finding fault with the means, so long as the end is answered to us: let us not charge God with cruelty, as many have dared to do, in the permission of man's fall, by saying, that the scheme of man's redemption was planned even before the fall: for we neither know of any such things as reveal'd in scripture, nor will it quadrate with the reason of man; for by that examin'd, it will appear, as I have above hinted, that man must have been originally free, or of a nature infinitely below what he now is in the scale of beings: and if he was free, he was most certainly known to be so by God who made him; he who formed him must know that he was (by misusing his liberty) liable to fall, for it is not in man to direct his ways*, and therefore might graciously provide against that evil by the redemption scheme; and yet not forcibly constrain him so to do, or be the sole efficient cause of his sin, only in order that Christ might die to reinstate him in bliss; for he was the maker and the judge of all the earth; and therefore could not but do right†.

Again, let the reflection on the dark veil, through which the patriarchs of old, and all our forefathers and predecessors, down to the Christian æra, saw the redemption, fill us with the most convictive faith, in the means made use of to bring many souls to righteousness, the death and passion of our Saviour Christ; of whose being lifted up, and the reason why, we have now the most undoubted proof, both in sacred and prophane

* Jer. x. ver. 23.

† Gen. xviii. ver. 25.

phane history, and that too delivered down to us by the most accurate and authentic authors of the Jewish history, whom one would have supposed most concerned to conceal it. In former times, God spake to mankind in visions, by prophecies, &c. but in these last days of the Christian age, God hath spoken to us by his son, teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ||. Mankind was long in a state of ignorance and uncertainty, as to the things which belonged to their everlasting peace; and at these times of ignorance God winked, but now commandeth all men every where to repent §. Now since light is come into the world, and the sun of righteousness hath shed abroad the rays of his comfortable doctrine, we are expected to walk as children of light †.

Let us consider a little further our present happy state, with that of our first parents, and we shall see great reason to admire and adore God's goodness to us, who brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel. Adam under the consciousness of guilt, saw his God in the garden †, with terror and amazement: but we now see our redeemer in the garden, with joyful hopes in him, as our propitiation. Adam fled from his maker, and strove to hide himself from his sight; but we are now made free, being bought with a price, and can

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both

|| Titus ii. ver. 12.

§ Acts xvii. ver. 30.

† Eph. v. ver. 8.

† Gen. iii. ver. 10.

both have access to the throne of grace†, and also are invited to dwell in and become one with Christ. In Adam, all the kindred, nations and people of the earth were cursed, for in Adam all died; but in Christ, the second Adam, that prince of peace, all the nations of the earth are blessed, and in him shall all be made alive§: we who were some time darkness, are now made light in the Lord||: we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of our God*: that is, we have a remission of our sins, are wash'd from the original impurity, with which through Adam's transgression we were defiled, and are justified by the voluntary blood-shedding of Christ|||; who through the eternal spirit, that is, his godhead and divine nature, offered himself without spot to God: which takes away all injustice, by some supposed to be in Jesus Christ's being made a sacrifice, for this very end, that we might be purged from dead works, to serve the Lord our God††.

Let us then walk as children of light: let us honour the profession of Christians, by a sanctity of manners and holiness of life: let us endeavour to strengthen one another, and to provoke unto love and to good works§§: always remembering, that if we sin wilfully, after having received

† Eph. iii. ver. 17.

§ 1 Cor. xv. ver. 22.

|| Eph. v. ver. 8.

* 1 Cor. vi, ver. 11.

||| Vide Locke in loc.

†† See Burkitt on Heb. ix. ver. 14.

§§ Heb. x, ver. 24.

ceived the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which will consume its adversaries*. Christ, it is true, was crucified for us, and for our salvation was once lifted up on the cross, and is now lifted up to his exalted seat in heaven, there not again to be our Saviour, but our intercessor with the father and our judge; no more to plead our cause, or rather suffer for it, but either to acquit or to condemn us, as we believe in conformity to his easy laws. This is the gospel age, the age of peace and reconciliation: now is the appointed and accepted time: now is the day of salvation†: and this once rejected; this day of grace once gone, is gone for ever. God and Christ have done their parts to save us, if we will be saved: let us do our parts, that by our endeavours, join'd with his merits, we may be sure that the prince of this world will be truly cast out; that the end of Christ's coming into the world, and being lifted up, will be fully answered, and all mankind, who do his will, will be drawn after him; and at last be instated in those mansions of bliss, which he is gone before to prepare for all those who love him and his appearing‡. Of which number, God grant we may be found, for the sake of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

* Heb. x. ver. 27. † 2 Cor. vi. ver. 2. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. ver. 8.

received the knowledge of the truth, there remains
 no more ignorance for him, but a certain fearful
 looking for of judgment and fiery indignation,
 which shall consume his adversaries. Christ is
 a man, was crucified for us, and for our sakes
 he was once lifted upon the cross, and is now
 seated upon his exalted throne in heaven, there he
 reigns to be our Governor, and our intercessor with
 the Father and our Judge: no more to plead
 our guilt, or rather suffer for it, but either to
 receive us to condemnation as we believe in con-
 formity to his holy laws, or to his holy gospel, age,
 the age of peace and reconciliation: now is the day
 appointed and accepted time: now is the day
 of salvation: and this once rejected, this day
 of grace once gone, is gone forever. God and
 Christ have done their part to save us, if we
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 obedience, joined with his merits, we may be
 made sharers in the prince of this world, and thereby
 set out the end of Christ's coming into the
 world, and being lifted up, will be fully answer-
 ed, and all mankind, who doubt will be
 drawn after him, and as a lamb led in the
 shearer's hand, shall follow him, and his ap-
 pointed shall receive his inheritance, and his ap-
 pointed shall receive his inheritance, that of grace we
 have received, which is the gift of God, Jesus
 Christ our Lord, our Father, our God, and our
 Father, and to him, it is very profitable
 to know that the gospel year is in the year, and
 that many controversies and disputes
 which it is thought
 German

(44)

Sermon XVII.

On the Mystery of Godliness.

I epist. Tim. chap. iii. ver. 16.

And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

ALTHOUGH St. James termed the Christian dispensation a perfect law of liberty; and it no doubt was so in the sense wherein he meant it, when compar'd to the Jewish dispensation; yet we cannot but join with the apostle St. Paul in this epistle, which he writes to Timothy upon his going to Macedonia, to preach there; and with him confess, that without controversy (when all the aggregated parts are taken in) great is the mystery of godliness; which is, as if he had said to him; it is very possible that your preaching the gospel (as it is in truth a mystery) will raise many controversies and disputes, because of the word; which if it should, you must

~~must not wonder at it, since I confess, that with-~~
 out any additions by the disputers of this world,
 the mysteries of the Christian dispensation are
 very great, even when accompanied with no con-
 troversial argumentations at all: when you come
 to acquaint the ignorant heathens you are to
 preach ~~to of these things, or attempt to bring~~
 over the stubborn Jews to subscribe in general to
 the Christian system, no doubt you will meet
 with the highest opposition. Some there are who
 will treat it rudely, and reject it as an impracti-
 cable scheme; whilst others will be so amazed at
 many of its constituent parts, and the sublimity
 of its declarations, that they will perhaps think
 it so mysterious, as not to concern them at all.
 A third sort (and those too among the wise of this
 world) may alledge, that reason is the characte-
 ristic of our natures, and that they are very will-
 ing to make use of theirs: but this reason ap-
 pears weak and insufficient to the purposes it
 should now answer, in case they are required to
 believe this doctrine (as necessary to salvation)
 which their very reason (the only criterion they
 have to judge of doctrinal points by) can no way
 conceive of. They may add further, and object,
 that there can be no obligation upon them to
 obey a law, which they cannot understand, and
 of which indeed they can form no idea: the
 Jews have (it's true) always excepted a Messiah,
 but they expected (or rather had formed notions
 of) one who should appear in a quite different
 light, from what Jesus of Nazareth did; tho' had
 they attended diligently to the types and prophe-
 cies

cies concerning him, they might have expected him, even as he did appear. These and many more objections, I think St. Paul might be suppos'd to suspect, would be made to his son Timothy upon his preaching the gospel, and might be the occasion of his inserting these words in regard to controversies about the faith of Christ: and the more so, if we observe what he says in the first verse of the next chapter; where he tells us, that the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the last times there shall be a departing from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrine of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron: and in this light it appear'd highly necessary for him to warn Timothy of it; lest as he was a young man, and a young preacher, he might be intimidated and discouraged, which was the thing he suppos'd would happen, and so bids him not fear, tho' he might be despis'd for his youth. Now as to the latter days here mentioned, whether St. Paul particularly meant the ages immediately succeeding the last of their personal preaching; or whether he might mean every age since, (which I think from the general practice may be suppos'd) yet this I am well assur'd of, that no age ever answer'd the description he gives, or came nearer to the character of the latter days than the present; wherein infidelity so much abounds, and a general scoffing at religion, and all serious things, so much engrosses our modern conversation: I shall therefore consider them in that light, as most nearly concerning us now, and endeavour from the text,

I. First, to prove the truth of the several articles mentioned in the text, wherein this mystery of godliness consists; and as a consequence from thence,

II. Secondly, answer the objections, which are rais'd by the sceptics and unbelievers of the present age; and

III. Offer some motives to induce our assent to the doctrines deliver'd, as I hope to prove them to come from God.

The first assertion of St. Paul is, that godliness (as it is here meant or stands for the religion of Jesus Christ) is a great mystery: and so no doubt it is, especially if the concomitant circumstances, which he mentions to prove it by, are taken into the account, to wit;

1. First, that God was manifested in the flesh.
2. Secondly, that he was justified in the spirit.
3. Thirdly, that he was seen of angels.
4. Fourthly, that he was preached unto the Gentiles.
5. Fifthly, that he was believed on in the world.
6. Sixthly, that he was received up into glory.

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I. The truth of all which I am to prove, agreeable to my first engagement.

1. And it must appear a great mystery to every considerate mind, to think on the incarnation of the son of God; to think that he by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made*; that he who was self-existent and unoriginated should come into this lower world, be clothed with mortality, and in consequence (as to the body he took upon him) should die; that he who was before all things and above all things, should be rendered weak and frail, and become in all things like unto man, sin only excepted. And yet this is revealed to us, in that gospel which we are to believe: this is manifested to us in the incarnation and Messiahship of Christ, of whom we are told that he and his father are one†. To conceive adequate notions of this hypostatic union is impossible for us; for finite beings cannot comprehend infinite, tho' at the same time it is what we may believe, because we cannot prove it to be impossible. It is and always will be a mystery unto us, whilst we are clothed with mortality, (and until we are got behind the veil, where every thing will be made plain to us) and yet not cease on that account to be an object of our faith. That God as God should die, is an absurdity even to suppose; for if he could have died, he would have ceased to be God, since immortality and eternity are essential properties

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* John i. ver. 3.

† John x. ver. 30.

of his being, who was the first cause of all things. But yet that he might be pleased to inhabit an animal body, and in that might die, in order to answer all the ends and purposes of man's redemption, and give that satisfaction required to his own righteousness and justice, and thereby pay the debt due from man to God; these are not things impossible: for his being, as it is not capable of being circumscrib'd by any point of space, but omnipresent, was not at all more absent from one place than another, by having resided for the purpose of his infinite wisdom in an animal body, than if he had not done it; because pure, perfect, spiritual essence pervades all matter, not meeting with resistance: and yet his purposes of mercy are by this means answer'd in regard to fallen man: besides, there was a kind of intimation of this made even to Adam in paradise; more explicitly was it hinted to the patriarchs and prophets; and God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake unto our forefathers by his prophets*, has in these last days spoken to us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he made the world. Now this manifestation of Christ in the flesh, will still more fully appear, if we consider,

2. The second article in the mystery of godliness, namely, that he was justified in the spirit. He was justified in the spirit by the testimony of the angel to his virgin mother, that what was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost†: he was justified in the spirit by the bodily descent of the Holy

* Heb. i. ver. 1.

† Matt. i. ver. 20.

Holy Ghost in the shape of a dove at his baptism by St. John†. He was justified in the spirit by the many miracles he wrought, and the miraculous gifts he conferred by means of the Holy Ghost upon his followers after his ascension, especially that first and most amazing one, the gift of tongues§; for how is it possible that mere men, unassisted and unletter'd, should every one of them (as the twelve apostles did) speak all manner of languages at once? This was most certainly the justification of Christ in the spirit, which thus bore witness to his life and doctrines, his miracles and cures, his death and sufferings, his resurrection and ascension up to heaven. We know, and all of us are assured, that miracles do not now accompany the word. It costs us a deal of labour now to learn even a few languages, and many tedious trials are made to this purpose, which are often vain and fruitless, but always attended with a considerable length of time. But here the apostle of our Lord instantaneously spoke all the languages of the then known world: and will any one dispute, that when the promises which the Messiah made to his apostles were so punctually fulfilled, when there was this justification of the spirit in his favour, that yet he was not God as well as man? Besides, God says by his prophet, I am sought of them that asked not for me, I am found of them that sought me not*. And here is another proof of this God manifested in the flesh to the Gentiles: he was preach'd unsought for, and he was found of them, by their immediately turning

† John i. ver. 32.

§ Acts ii. ver. 4.

* Isa. lxx. ver. 1.

turning from paganism and idolatry to Christianity; which plainly shews, he was so manifested in the flesh, as to become the light to lighten the Gentiles†, as well as to be the glory of God's people Israel; and so, as to be the salvation of all the ends of the earth. Sundry and manifold ways, was God manifested in the flesh; first, by answering all the expectations which the Jews might reasonably gather from the predictions of him: for he was the seed of the woman, which was promised to Adam in Paradise, that should bruise the serpent's head‡: he was the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed§; and St. Paul tells the Corinthians, that no man speaking with the spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed||: that is, no man can deny him to be God manifest in the flesh, without denying at the same time, the justification of that spirit, which gave such gifts unto men; which gifts, tho' they were different in their natures, were all given by the same spirit, and to the same end; that is, in order to prove the truth of Christ's religion, and the efficaciousness of his Messiahship: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, firm faith, the power of healing, the working of miracles, divers kinds of tongues and the interpretations: all these tho' separate in their natures, and different in their operations were yet so many conjunct attestations of that mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh: they were given to the ends, that the saints might be perfected, for the carrying

† Luke ii. ver. 32.

‡ Gen. iii. ver. 15.

| § Gen. xxvi. ver. 4.

|| 1 Cor. xii. ver. 3.

carrying on and support of the ministry of the apostles, and for edifying the church of God*, until all should come to the unity of faith, to an acknowledgment of the son of God, and a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus.

The Jews required a sign†, in order to induce them to believe; and had they not many afforded, and them too of the most convictive nature? were not the maimed heal'd, and demoniacks cured? was not sight given to the blind? did not the lame walk? and were not the tongues of the dumb loosed? nay, even the dead raised before their eyes for their conviction? and by all these things one of the most remarkable prophecies was fulfilled, as may be seen in the thirty-fifth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, from the third to the tenth verse inclusive.

The Greeks sought after wisdom; and was it not a display of wisdom of the highest nature, that when the world by wisdom knew not God; that is, when all the learning of the Greeks was not available, for answering the purposes of, or satisfying the mind of man, in regard to the manifestation of Christ, God should then by the foolishness of preachings‡, (that is, by the preaching of those, whom the learned Greeks, comparatively speaking, estimated as fools) save them that believe, by making that which the Greeks accounted foolishness (because not embellish'd and set off with all the flowers of rhetoric, a nervous elocution,

* Eph. iv. ver. 12.

† 1 Cor. i. ver 22.

‡ Ibid. ver. 21.

elocution, and a sublime majestic flow of diction,) of force sufficient for the spread of christianity, and to answer all the purposes, which possibly could have been answer'd, had the most consummate wisdom been exerted?

And when the Holy Ghost the comforter was thus come, when he was pleased to give such attestations (as have been mentioned) to the divine Logos, for leading his disciples, who before his death greatly doubted, into all truth; the effect was such, that nothing could prevail upon them to give up the cause of Christ, neither persecuti-on, bonds, imprisonment, or even death itself; but when the spirit had thus set his seal to the revelation of Christ, none of these could prevail with, or influence them to let go the profession of their faith; but thus supported, they held it fast without wavering*: and how in after times did the noble army of martyrs persevere in the same principles, upon the same convictions? how unwearied were they in their preachings and their exhortations! and whence could this proceed, but from the spirit of God bearing witness with their spirit†, making them do the things which pleased him, and enabling them to continue steadfast and immoveable in the work of the Lord‡, as judging him faithful who had promis'd; and thence concluding that their labours would not be in vain in the Lord: thus did the blood of the martyr'd apostles, disciples and Christians, become the seed of the church.

Again,

* Heb. x. ver. 23. † Rom. viii. ver. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. ver. 58.

Again, it is possible, that he that once tabernacled in the cloud of glory, who was called the angel of the covenant, the angel of the Lord and Jehovah, did afterwards tabernacle in our nature§, and might be him, who was to be manifested in our flesh, to destroy the man of sin, to abolish the curse on Adam and his posterity, to fulfil man's obligations, to appease God's anger'd justice, to atone for our crimes, and make intercession for the transgressors||.

There was one part of the wisdom of the Greeks, which indeed the disciples did not follow viz. the hieroglyphical similes they made use of: and indeed with good reason did they not, because that kind of instruction could not be so generally understood by the ignorant and unlearned; and the disciples doctrines, (plain as they were,) without enigmatical signs might be believed (and wonder'd at too) by the wisest of the Greeks; especially when they saw the power with which the word spread itself, by the attestation of the spirit, assisting them to work many notable miracles, as the great ones among the Jews themselves confess'd; so that they had no occasion to turn conjurors in order to convince mankind. I come now to

3. The third proof of this mystery, that he was seen of angels; and as the Greek word here render'd angels is often taken for messengers, and

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§ See Benson's annotations on my text.

|| Isa. liii ver. 12.

and is so used in many places of scripture; I shall consider it in this light, tho' there is no doubt, but that in it's primary and more general signification, it means a being superior to man*. And here it is plain he was seen by the messengers of Herod, who carried with them also the justification of the spirit, as was seen from their having inclination to return back to that cruel arbitrary tyrant, but were warn'd to the contrary. By his own apostles also at his transfiguration in a resplendent manner||: at which time also there was the manifestation of the spirit in the voice, which came out of the cloud saying, this is my beloved son, hear him†. He was seen by an angel when proclaimed at his birth, by the cælestial herald, when ministred to in the garden: seen also probably by those twelve legions of angels‡, which he mentioned as ready at his call to attend him, and to rescue him from his persecutors. Seen also doubtless by the angel that rolled away the stone from his sepulchre§; seen by St. John and others of his apostles, angels or messengers, after his resurrection: seen by them and numbers more at his glorious ascension.

4. The next point is, fourthly, that he was preached to the Gentiles, to the rude, unlearned and bigotted Gentiles, to those who were look'd upon in the most ignominious light, and exceedingly despis'd by the Jewish nation: nor did

* See Benson in loc.

|| Mark ix. ver. 2.

† Matt. iii. ver. 17.

‡ Matt. xxvi. ver. 53.

§ Matt. xxviii. ver. 2.

did God Almighty here, at all break his promises to the Jews, of their being his chosen people; for the offers of salvation were made, (tho' not to the Jews only) yet to them first, and afterwards to the Gentiles§. But the Jews, tho' they were surrounded with wonders, and deliver'd by many miracles, and invited to come into the christian revelation, yet despis'd them all: the threatnings of God would not avail, the preaching of his prophets had no force with them; but they all went out of the way, and became altogether abominable*: yet this did not prevent the Almighty from still exerting himself in their favour, and after he had sent them all the messengers most likely to work conversion; at last he sent unto them his son; who was also sent to the Jews first, being of the tribe of Judah, and born a Jew: to the Jews he appear'd first, even to the most learned of them, in his preaching to the doctors in the temple: to the Jews he appear'd first in his miraculous powers; for I think, we read but of one Gentile, on whom a miracle was wrought, during his whole ministry; and that might be as a kind of earnest of the Gentiles conversion, in case of a refusal from the Jews: all this preference was given to the Jews, that they who were his favourite people might have no excuse for their unbelief: but at last all the means used proving ineffectual, they also were concluded under sin†, (that God might have mercy upon all,) and absolutely put upon the footing of the heathen nations, the unenlight-

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§ Rom. ii. ver. 10. * Psalm xiv. ver. 1. † Gal. iii. ver. 22.

ened Gentiles: and this was merciful to them also, and a kind of preference reserv'd for them, even in this case; for tho' the Gentiles gladly received Christ, at his first being preached unto them, yet were they concluded under sin; and the Jews to whom he was preached over and over, and who would not assent to his doctrine, were yet but concluded under sin likewise; that in case there were any that in after-times (upon seeing how readily the Gentiles came in) would believe; the promise of Jesus Christ might be given to them: now one would have thought, that such an obstinate refusal on the Jews part, and such a readiness of compliance on the Gentiles, would have induced God to have given them the preference, and not to have equaliz'd both Jew and Gentile in this his dispensation: but all this was agreeable to the peculiar separation of the Jews from the rest of the world; and God seems to have had this so much in mind, as to suffer it to weigh with him for their advantage, notwithstanding their obstinacy and refusal of compliance.

But to proceed, he was preached unto the Gentiles; in which there is something very remarkable, especially if we consider, by whom he was preached unto them, even by the most violent bigot, and perhaps one of the most learned Jews in the whole kingdom: the most violent bigot, because he every where persecuted the christian converts wherever he met with them, was one who made havcck of the christian church,

church, and went into houses haling men and women, and committing them to prison†, as he himself confesses in the account he gives of his conversion to Christianity: Christ was preached to the Gentiles, by one of the most learned Jews, who was born at Tarsus, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a noted Jewish rabbi, taught according to the most perfect manner of the law of their fathers, zealous towards God, and I suppose bigoted to the highest degree. And yet this was the man by whom salvation through Christ was preached unto the Gentiles; and surely one of the most proper (though most wonderful) instruments in the world, for the purpose. And herein appears also, part of the mystery of godliness, Christ's being preached to the Gentiles, by one who in all probability was look'd upon as the most improper person living by the Jews, and (we may suppose by) the Gentiles too, till he had given that full account which he does of the wonderful manner of his conversion: and what a blow was this to the Jews, to have the champion of infidelity turn believer; a most violent bigot to reform; to have the persecutor of the Christians abett their cause, and even die in its defence: he makes use of this argument himself to the Galatians, when he tells them, he received not the gospel from by man, but the revelation of God*; that they well knew he had had his conversation among the Jews, and had persecuted beyond measure the church of God, and wasted it: but immediately upon the
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† Acts viii. ver. 3. † Acts xxii. ver. 3. * Gal. i. ver. 12.

force of this revelation, he conferred not with flesh and blood†, no longer halted between two opinions, no longer resisted the spirit, but immediately went upon a different ministry, even to the heathen, to the unconverted, to those who wallow'd in Pagan idolatry, and were blinded with their own folly: the Gentiles then received him; and he with his depth of learning, and by the inspiration of the holy spirit, (which by the way is another proof of the justification of the spirit) and that nervous rhetoric and oratory he was master of, proved a most glorious instrument of the power of God unto salvation, and was most surely the properest person in the whole Jewish nation for the work; and was most evidently the cause of

5. The fifth article of the text, that Christ was believed on in the world. For sure it requir'd more than common abilities, to soften the tempers and convince the understandings of contumacious and obdurate bigots, to instruct the ignorant, to settle the doubtful, to reclaim the vicious, and to strengthen the new converts, who were to be brought to perfect faith and obedience by degrees; which even with all his powers and abilities, prov'd sometimes ineffectual, by means of the antichristian apostles cankering persuasions, of whom he so much complain'd. All these things were necessary to be done; and had not St. Paul been particularly assisted, by the spirit of God in his ministry, it would have been

† Gal. i. ver. 16.

been impossible he should have succeeded: hence we may learn, that God can bring about the purposes of his providence as well by the weak as by the strong; as readily by the simplicity of unlearned fishermen, as by the wisdom and discretion of the wise and prudent; not more, by means which seem most probable and likely, than by such as to our finite understandings seem most unlikely and improbable.

6. The last article of this mystery of godliness comes now to be consider'd, and that is, he was received up into glory, his godship reinstated, and his manhood (the work thereof being now finished) exalted to Heaven. St. John says, that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*; and he foretold his ascension long before his death, in many conversations with his disciples. The angels also testify concerning Christ's ascension; that in the same manner he was seen to go up to Heaven, should he come again from thence†; which is spoken of the last day: the ascension is a most extraordinary instance and proof of the messiahship of Jesus, and the last that ever will be offer'd to the incredulous; and tho' perhaps less astonishing, as working upon the senses, than many other things, which are the objects of faith; yet so amazing is it, as not to be conceived of a mere man, and therefore a strong proof of God's being manifested in the flesh: this also confirms what he hinted to his apostles, that it was expedient for them that he should

* Rev. xix. ver. 10.

† Acts. i. ver. 11.

should go away, in order that he might send the comforter to them*, who was to guide them into all truth, confirm their doubting minds, and make up the loss of their master, their guide, their friend, and their protector; and in consequence of this ascension, we may join with the Royal Psalmist in his exultation, in the 68th Psalm; The Lord hath ascended up on high, and hath led captivity captive, and hath received gifts for men: and again, the Lord is gone up on high, and our God with the sound of the trumpet†. Thus have I gone through the six several proofs of the mystery of godliness mentioned in the text, and come now to my

II. Second general head, which was to answer the objections raised by the deists, and other sceptical infidels and unbelievers against this material truth of christianity; which I shall do first negatively, and then positively. And,

I. First, it is not impossible that there ever was a revelation. We are not sure, that no notices were ever given to mankind of a fallen state; neither do we certainly know, that no promise was ever made to Adam, of an atonement for him; and his progeny, who became obnoxious to death, through his disobedience: we are not sure, that there never were any hints given of a vicarious sacrifice to be accepted in lieu of obedience: and the books supposed to contain this revelation are of such a nature, from their antiquity,

* John xvii. ver. 7.

† Psalm xlvii. ver. 5.

tiquity, and the common acceptation they have always met with, as at least to deserve the common credit given at all times to well supported facts: and besides the precepts contain'd in them are such, as well observed, will greatly tend to the benefit of mankind: they carry nothing in them, that clashes or interferes with the relation in which we stand to God; nor will the decrying of them, and endeavouring to prevail upon mankind to disbelieve them any way further their happiness or peace of mind here, or at all brighten their prospect, in regard to another life. It cannot be certainly proved that man was created the same weak and feeble creature he now is; but there are strong intimations to the contrary, and it seems more agreeable to the nature of a wise, and good, and perfect being to conceive he should make his creatures perfect in their natures: so that these their persuasions must upon the best arguments, they can make use of, be still left as a matter of faith upon their own minds, and the minds of those, who through their solicitations embrace them: and why may not faith, which is the evidence of things not seen*, be admitted in one sense as well as in another? why may we not, as well believe, that man was created rational, free and perfect, but fell from that state by his own abuse of his permitted liberty, and that God the son appear'd in the flesh to reinstate him; as that he never was created perfect, that he has had no mediator, no intercessor, nor any need of either; God made not death, but men brought destruction upon them.

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* Heb. chap. xi. ver. 1.

themselves by the works of their own hands; of pity to whose wretched state, the Almighty of his mere mercy, tenderly contrived the gracious plan of our redemption: is it not more comfortable to suppose that a life of bliss and happiness is prepar'd and provided for us after our dissolution, and that too on the surest possible pledge, than to believe that after all the conflicts and trials, troubles and temptations, we have grappled with in this world; we shall die like dogs, and be no more, but after death, be levelled with inert matter, and crumbled into dust, never again to be reanimated, never to have the vital spark rekindled more? and had it not been for a revelation, this must have remained a matter of meer conjecture, and still remains so, if there has been no revelation granted to mankind; or if those books, which are called the scriptures, are false; since we have no more perfect scheme to go by: but I shudder at the thought; for even in a state of nature, a revelation to point out to us a Saviour, was absolutely necessary; or else how would man be freed from the guilt of those sins, which he commits against the light of nature, and by committing them is render'd liable to the anger of God, and consequently to punishment, which as we are told (and is reasonable to suppose) would have been death and absolute non-entity, even in the mildest sense, and there could have been no immortality or life brought to light but by the gospel*; all previous notions of this kind were but faint wishes, mere glimmerings of hope, built on great uncertainty, and could not afford true satisfaction

* 2 Tim. chap. i. ver. 10.

faction to the mind of man, till the whole was cleared up by the appearance of that sun of righteousness, who came with healing in his wings. And if the Deists are in the right, our faith is vain†; we are yet in our sins; and we may with miserable hearts, cry out, if Christ is not come, if there is no revelation, who shall deliver us from this body of sin and death‡?

I own that these people according to their hypothesis, and in support of it, take a very effectual way, supposing it would answer their purpose, by knocking down all revelation, but what they call intuitive revelation, or natural impulse; because if all written revelation be ablated, then all types, prophecies, predictions, &c. fall to the ground at once, and consequently the doctrine of a mediator falls with them: but if they will grant me one point of intuitive revelation, I will upon that prove all the rest, for if the compiler or compilers of all or any part of the scriptures (as well as any other history, and sure they may have at least the same chance) may be supposed to have this intuitive revelation or intuitive direction, it is possible, they were by that directed to write what they did; and then upon this footing the scriptures are consequential revelation, founded upon that original intuitive revelation, which they admit to be likely and probable, or at least possible: and then this revelation being thus freed (I will only say from impossibility) whilst founded upon this intuitive revelation, the doctrines contained in them will become forcibly impulsive

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† 1 Cor. chap. xv. ver. 24.

‡ Rom. chap. vii. ver. 24.

of our obedience: and therefore in consequence of their own principles they must be self condemned in disbelieving them: nay, and it seems a paradox that they can disbelieve them at all: for supposing the revelation of scripture to be consequent upon intuitive revelation then all the doctrines mentioned in the text will follow of course; as proper credendas even of the Deists themselves: and things thus settled and adjusted; that there is a God, may be easily believed and prov'd, and that this same God was manifest in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil, that he was also seen of angels, had the testimony of the spirit, was believed on in the world, preached unto the Gentiles, (the heathens of those days) and at last received up into glory. And in consequence of this way of reasoning, as all arguments taken from scripture, must in order to have any force, suppose revelation; so the Deists endeavour to prove there never was any given, which they try to support, by supposing it necessary; and at the same time aim at complimenting the Almighty, by not so much as supposing that he would do a thing vain and needless: for, say they, if two things are to any one end, and one is sufficient, the other must be needless; and they assert, that the light of nature was fully sufficient of itself to answer all the duties of morality, and as to the religion of Jesus, tho' it was as to it's moral parts exceeding good, and every way irreproachable, yet say they, it was but the same they had before; and this second edition of it answer'd no more purposes, than the former had done, or might have done, properly attended to; therefore there

there was no occasion for it: and as to every thing relative to faith, and every thing additional to the moral rules, they make but short work with, and call them all sophistifications, never laid down by Christ, but merely priestcraft, and the inventions of men: which indeed, if they deliver'd as their opinion, in regard to many of the superstitions of the church of Rome, and the interpolations of her bible, they would be in the right.

Now in answer to this objection, I would desire them to observe in the first place, that they themselves neither are, nor can be judges of what a state of nature is; because as men of capacity for arguing, whose parts have been cultivated and improv'd by polite literature, they cannot help a little leaning to those things, which were either first impress'd upon them by their education, or what they have built thereon. Their suppos'd state of nature therefore, is a fine scheme in theory, but they cannot be at all judges of it's force, because they cannot replace themselves in it.

Then as to the vicarious sacrifice of Christ and his satisfaction; that they cannot hold with at any rate; for such a supposition, say they, but reflects cruelty upon God, to lay the sins of the wicked on the innocent. In answer to which, I would observe that Christ says, that he lays down his life of himself, that no man taketh it from him; but he hath power to lay it down, and take it up again:

again*: St. Matthew tells us that he gave his life a ransom for many†. St. Paul too in his Epistle to Timothy, declares that he gave his life a ransom for all§; and if he was willing, in order to discharge mankind of the debt of sin, which they had contracted, to lay down his life, and God the Father, was pleased to accept it on man's account, and in lieu of of their sinless obedience: in such case, there was a kind of merciful contract made between God the Father, and God the Son, on account of fallen man, of which mankind knew nothing: nay, not only were they ignorant of it; but so great was the mystery, that even the angels desired to pry into it||, and were not able: and yet for all this, our modern Deists, instead of being highly delighted with, and thankful for it, instead of cheerfully embracing the offers of grace and mercy, made to them by Jesus Christ, and looking upon it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that he came into the world to save sinners*, strive to create in themselves and others, not only a disbelief of these truths, but also charge God with cruelty, in laying the sins of one person upon another, tho' this was done freely, and with the full consent of the sufferer; not considering that, Volenti non fit injuria. I hope by this time they are somewhat convinced, that it is impossible, the authority of these books should be a proper subject of their cavils, (which never have been, nor even can be imitated for their sublimity of stile, and importance of their contents) without offering the highest

* John chap. x. ver. 18.

† Matth. ch. xx. ver. 28.

Mark ch. x. ver. 45.

| § 1 Ep. Tim. ch. ii. ver. 6.

|| 1 Pet. ch. i. ver. 12.

* 1 Ep. Tim. ch. i. ver. 15.

est affront to the author of our nature, and without giving a manifest denial to every intellectual faculty of the human mind: and now let us suppose, that these people should be mistaken, how unhappy must they then be, to think how they have deceived themselves and others; to find themselves try'd and condemn'd by that law, which I suppose they have often read, and might have believed if they would: how unhappy must they be, when they find themselves accountable for the impositions, they have forc'd upon other honest and well meaning creatures? will they not be look'd upon, as the evil ones, who have sown tares among the wheat†, and as such punish'd at the last day? whilst on the other hand, if the believer should prove mistaken, what does he lose? why nothing but that bliss hereafter, which he expected would have been the reward of his good actions here? but then by being no more (which future life is what we only have from revelation) after this life, he is not sensible of his loss; for, *qui malum ignorat, non malum sentit*; and as to his present state here, his loss is only, all those gratifications and lusts, which indulg'd would render him more unhappy, and those appetites, which would inevitably prove detrimental to him: this is the chief of his disappointment: but if the disbeliever of revelation, by any intemperance loses his health (as he does not believe in an atonement made for him conjunctly with his repentance) he loses what is the greatest blessing of life here, and upon his own hypothesis, the summum bonum of his whole being:

† Mat. ch. xiii. ver 25.

being: for he has no hope hereafter, nor can he have any but what must be revealed: and therefore he denying a revelation can have none at all.

These are the only restraints which this suppos'd revelation lays upon men, and surely can be no argument against the belief of it, unless it be an argument against the being of a God, that he should be good and merciful to his creatures, and provide the best means for their happiness both here and hereafter.

In answer to this attempted defence of revelation, they are ready to say again, why was not this revelation made sooner, if it was so necessary? why was it not known to the world so many ages ago? and why even now at this day, is it not more diffusive? why is it confin'd to such a small part of the known world? why do so many live in absolute ignorance of the things, which belong to their peace and salvation? In answer to all which queries, let it be observ'd that St. Paul says, Christ gave his life a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*: now in this expression, there is an assertion, that Christ gave his life a ransom for all, which is general and all comprehensive; by which I understand the whole world, every where, none excepted but such who wilfully refuse to accept it through unbelief: and as to its being testified in due time, that I understand to signify in God's own time, which always is the best, that is, that he may permit some part of the

the world to arrive at the knowledge of his will at one time, and some part at another; that to some now is the accepted time, the day of salvation*; to others many years hence perhaps to come: to some it may be darkly, and to others clearly revealed: which supposition (tho' true) as it may offer some ground of caviel, in regard of distributive justice, I would (in order to clear up) have it observed, that those, who to the best of their power, follow the law of mere nature, and the dictates of all those intuitive impressions, which they receive (from what is to them a revelation) will (as I conceive) be accepted in Christs voluntary sacrifice of himself as a ransom for all. Many instances of which I could produce from scripture; but I chuse to quote them as seldom as I can help, till I have brought its adversaries to see its necessity and weight when acknowledged. But even from reason, it should seem very clear to every reflective mind, that God who is infinite in all perfections is so in the attribute of justice: and as he is judge of all the earth, and perfect in wisdom, so he can do no wrong, and will not require an obedience from those, to whom he has not given any other revelation of his will: that as to those whose perceptions are weak, and who can but very imperfectly comprehend the doctrinal points of a revelation: they will be dealt with according to the divine rule of his most perfect justice, and be answerable only for the abuse of those powers of comprehension which they had; and not for those which they had not.

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* 2 Cor. ch. vi. ver. 2.

To this perhaps they will further object, that it is therefore much better for the unenlighten'd than for others, since they are not answerable for the abuse of revelation, nor can abuse it because it is not offer'd to them. But upon this supposition, non-entity is preferable to being, ignorance to wisdom, and stupidity to the most enlightn'd faculties; all which I absolutely deny.

1. First because being gives a possibility of being happy, and the performance of the duties of reveal'd religion, added to the law of nature will intitle (if I may so say) to a much greater reward, and the powers of thought and reflection give the balance happily to us: inasmuch as it is in our power by the help of revelation so to live as to have pleasure in reflexion; certain it is, that every one can do what he can: and God expects no more; and when that is done we may be joyful through hope and patient in believing. But to come closer to the point of difference between the heathens and those to whom light is sprung up*; God Almighty knows, (tho' we do not) what improvement or abuse the pagan, or heathen world or those who are still more illiterate would have made of a revelation, had they been favour'd with it, and therefore if for the wise ends of his providence, he has not thought fit to admit the glorious light of the gospel of Christ to shine in their hearts†; yet (as what improvement they would have made of a revelation, had they had it, is only known to him, who knows the hearts of all men) he may justly reward

* Mat.^h chap. iv. ver. 16. † 2 Cor.^h ch. iv. ver. 6.

reward or punish those persons according to actions foreknown to him, which they will then be convinc'd of, when the heathen shall be judged in his sight: for whenever he enters into judgment with the world they must be cast, and he be clear; not by the despotic power of an arbitrary ruler, but by such laws, as he has given us to go by, and which from the apparent reasonableness of them, we either have or ought to have subscribed to: he is not a partial and vindictive, but a merciful and kind being; and therefore we may be assured, we shall never be condemned by him, but when our consciences and the moral sense of our minds join to acquit him, and we our selves approve the justice even of a miserable sentence.

2. Again, secondly, it is not impossible, nor can these persons prove that the Deity is not tri-personate, or three persons in one God: or that one of these should come, and fulfill all the scheme of the great three-one, in regard to man, whether it be in relation to his nature, his duty, or his expectations: for in all these senses Christ acted man's part: what related to his nature in its most perfect state by his perfect morality, relatively to his duty, by fulfilling all righteousness, and relatively to his expectation, because he had in it, (as man) a respect unto the recompence of reward, and contemplative joy in regard to the crown that was set before him§: he contentedly wore the crown of thorns, that we might wear the crown of glory: these persons are ready to

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† Psa. ix. ver. 19. § Heb. c. xii. ver. 2.

cry out, what can infinite wisdom, can God do any thing in vain? and yet we see plainly, they scruple not to say, he is a cruel being, in regard to the partial dispensing of his revelation if there is one: which point, I hope, I have sufficiently clear'd, and shall only therefore (before I pass to my third general head) observe upon them;

3. Thirdly, that these disputers would seem to take more pains to minister needless questions, such as are apt to gender strifes*, than such as tend to that edification, which is in faith: and by these disputes, the end of the commandment, which is charity†, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned is frustrated and lost, because all these things do but breed ill blood amongst men, and should therefore be avoided, as not flowing from a real belief of the truth of the word of God, which enjoins us to love one another, and to reprove with meekness‡. There must be a renewed heart as the fountain, and a well informed conscience as our guide, and if to these we add faith unfeigned, then all our reasonings and argumentations, whilst founded on charity will be accepted of God, as a piece of obedience to him, whenever we really have at heart the improvement of ourselves and fellow creatures, and when our disputes proceed not from an ostentation of superior skill in sophistical argumentation. And yet this is not a reason against arguing at all, for we are commanded to search the scriptures daily§ to try the spirits whether they

* 2 Tim. ch. ii. ver. 23.

† 1 Tim. ch. i. ver. 5.

| ‡ 2 Tim. ch. ii. ver. 25.

| § John, ch. v. ver. 39.

they be of God*, and earnestly to contend for the faith once deliver'd to the saint†. And in regard to religious affairs, St. Paul commends the Bereans who would not take things for granted, or upon trust, but searched and tryed whether these things were so‡: these, I say, he praises as more noble than their neighbours of Theſſalonica, who had not thus examin'd, but had been negligent in their researches. And besides it is very agreeable to the nature of rational creatures, that their faith should be founded on reason: for when reason coincides with it, then it ceases to be implicit faith, and men may then be said to have joy in believing: and I am sure, there is nothing in scripture, when fairly it has been examin'd that can be found repugnant or contradictory to right reason, nothing that will not bear the criterion of sound judgment, or stand the test of an impartial inquiry. It is absolutely necessary that we should be able to give an account of the faith that is in us; for till we can do this, we shall be in danger of being overturn'd by every wind of doctrine, and by the cunning craftiness of those who lye in wait to deceive§, by fostering upon us the doctrine of devils for the commandments of God. We are not so far to remain in ignorance, as not to endeavour to set our selves right if we are in the wrong, or content our selves with superficial inquiries: and more especially is it requisite (since infidelity prevails so much in all companies, wherever we go) that we should be furnish'd with arguments that may work upon the minds

* 1 John ch. iv. ver. 1.

† Jude, ver. 3.

‡ Acts, chap. xvii. ver. 11.

§ Eph. chap. iv. ver. 14.

minds of unbelievers in general: particularly such as relate to a revelation, and too nicely scrutinizing the ways of God: the appearing unnecessary of a propitiatory sacrifice is in every body's mouth, and paves the way for a general apostacy; for so long as mankind shall think, that nothing needs to be believ'd, but what exactly quadrates with their finite and limited comprehensions, they will by and by disbelieve (tho' they may be too great cowards to deny) the being of God himself; and therefore I say it is necessary, that we should put on the whole armour of God*; in support of that faith, which was once delivered to the saints, and as a battlement against these battering rams.

The abuse of revelation ought not to be charged upon revelation itself, for it is very remarkable, that when it had its due and proper force upon the human mind, it brought forth the fruits of the spirit: and we see the first christians were wonderfully remarkable for their reciprocal unity and love, and for many other virtues: it was a proverb among those who lived near or among them, to say, behold! how these christians love one another. And this was the effect which the doctrine of Christ and his apostles had and ever will have, when properly submitted to, and not cavilled at, as it is now. But tho' it is now otherwise, yet even the present delinquency is not chargeable on the religion, but on the professors, and is the consequence of that wilful darkness, which they bring upon themselves, by dis-

* Eph. chap. vi. ver. 11.

disbelieving against the strongest evidence, and chusing darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil†, in order that they may have ignorance to plead in their excuse; but wilful ignorance was never an excuse for wilful sin: and therefore upon the whole they are without a salvo: and if they sin wilfully after they have received, but would not embrace the knowledge of the truth, they will find that there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation‡, from the presence of the great God, when they shall be cast out into that punishment, which is the just reward, (not of those, who could not, but) of those, who would not know their God.

But I shall say no more to them at present, but pass on to my

III. Third general head, which was to offer some motives to induce our assent to the doctrine delivered, as I hope I have proved it to come from God: and if so, it will surely have its proper weight. If upon the whole then it shall appear agreeable to the nature of God to give happiness to his creatures, and to our nature to hope for happiness here and hereafter; and if happiness is not to be arriv'd at without content of mind; and if the mind cannot be satisfied but upon certain grounds of hope; and if certain grounds of hope are not to be found, but by revelation; then upon all those accounts it appears very agreeable to the nature of God and

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† John, chap. iii. ver. 19.

‡ Heb. chap. x. ver. 27. †

to the nature of man, that there should be a revelation. We have seen that the revelation which came by Jesus Christ, has a tendency to establish and confirm the moral law, and to improve the rectitude of our natures: however perfect it might have been in its natural state, christianity is the light of the moral world, and brings us joyful hope of pardon of all our failings; and altho' it shews us some things in a mysterious manner, yet it tells us at the same time, that secret things belong to God, whilst those that are reveal'd belong to us and to our children*; which is as much to as say, we are not answerable for what we cannot understand, after our most modest and humble, nay even after our boldest and most prying searches. It tells us, that some things we cannot know now, but we shall know hereafter; that we now see all things, but as thro' a glass darkly†; and that we are imperfect short sighted creatures: but then it acquaints us that when we put off this tabernacle of the body, we shall be clothed upon with glory: it tells us, that for our short, weak, and imperfect service here, we shall have a never ending reward hereafter; that our faculties will be enlarg'd, and we shall know even as we are known. It will not baulk us of our hope‡, which shall only cease by being lost in fruition: these things the mere light of nature never taught, or if it gave some out-line sketches of them they were so imperfect as to be but a slender encouragement to virtuous prosecutions, and therefore some of the philosophers of

* Deut. chap. xxix. ver. 29.

† 1 Cor. chap. xiii. ver. 12.

| ‡ Nec nos spes nostra fallent;

old look'd upon the practice of virtue as a reward to itself, without any view to a future one after death. Let us therefore lay hold with joy and gratitude, on these precious promises made to us in Jesus Christ, and hold fast the profession of that most perfect faith, which was once deliver'd to the saints. Let us not inquire (so as to cavil) into the method of God's dealings with others, but instead of that, let us take care so to behave ourselves, as to have through Christ a title to eternal bliss; considering well, that if those who acted contrary to the law of nature will be punished in proportion to their knowledge; and if those who under the Jewish dispensations despised Moses's law (which was but imperfect, a meer shadow of good things to come, the weak and beggarly elements on which our religion was to be built) if they who despised this law, which was but as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace†? Therefore ought we to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest (by deistical impressions in our conversations or any other way) at any time we let them slip, and are led to despise that word, which should seal us to the day of redemption§; that word, which was from the beginning,

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which

† Heb. x. ver. 26 & 29.

§ Eph. iv. ver. 30.

which was heard, which was seen; which was handled of the word of life†: for he who was the word, the way, the truth, and the life, was manifested to the apostles and first Christians; they saw him and bear witness unto us of that eternal life which was before all time with the father, and who in the fullness of time was manifested in the flesh, for us men and for our salvation; let us be careful not to cast away the word of God behind our backs, hating to be reformed: for we may be sure, that if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiv'd a just recompence of reward, we shall not escape, if we neglect so great (such sure, such incontestible) salvation; which at the first was spoken by the Lord himself, and afterwards by those that heard him§: God also (as I have shewn) bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.||

These I think are motives sufficiently coercive on our faith; motives I would hope sufficient to arm us against all the wiles of the devil, and his engines of destruction; and which will, when join'd with prayer to God, for his aid and assistance, be affectual to the purpose: which God Almighty grant thro' the merits of Jesus Christ, and for the honour and glory of his name. Amen.

† 1 John i. ver. 1. § Heb. ii. ver. 2, 3. || Ibid. ver. 4.

The following should have been inserted after the word God, in page 375, line 15.

What is it these infidels would have? They have a scheme of religion offered them most likely to make them happy here, and if its dictates are observed, will undoubtedly make them happy hereafter: a scheme of religion directly answering to every type relative to it; a scheme of religion that has made its way against all opposition, against the powers of arbitrary princes, and the tyranny of despotic monarchs: a scheme of religion that has been propagated in the most unexpected manner: and how came it to make such a progress? why! because it contained every thing in it that a religion meant for the happiness of mankind here and hereafter needed to contain; because it was a scheme of religion every way worthy of a good, wise, and glorious God, promulgated by the most unlikely means and instruments in the world; not by such who had the happiness of being disciplin'd in the schools of the prophets: but by a Matthew, who was in a public office; by a Mark, who was a poor, laborious and well-meaning fisherman; a Luke, who was a physician, at that time accounted but a mean and servile, tho' now a dignified profession; and by a John, who lived obscurely in a desert, almost secluded from public view by the retirement of his life: and yet these were the weak instruments that were ordained to confound the wise, supported by miracles of the
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most amazing kind, attested by eye-witnesses, who were so honest that they would not deceive others, and so wise as that they could not be deceived; for they, guided only by common sense, even from thence had a demonstration sufficient to invigorate them to go on in the prosecution of their ministry against all opposition, even of the most tyrannical powers, and were furnished from above with spirits that enabled them to stand the laugh of a despising world; nay more, to go to banishment, to death, and to embrace afflictions of every kind, for the sake of God and his cause.

